Toronto metro

METRO READERS SPEAK OUT ON RACISM
metroNEWS

Your essential daily news | WEEKEND, DECEMBER 16-18, 2016 | High -5°C/Low -6°C Cloudy

YOU LUCKY DOG YOU

'IT'S A MIRACLE'

AFTER BEING RUN OVER BY A GO TRAIN, LUNA SHOULD BE DEAD. ALL INVOLVED TRY — AND FAIL — TO EXPLAIN HOW SHE SURVIVED

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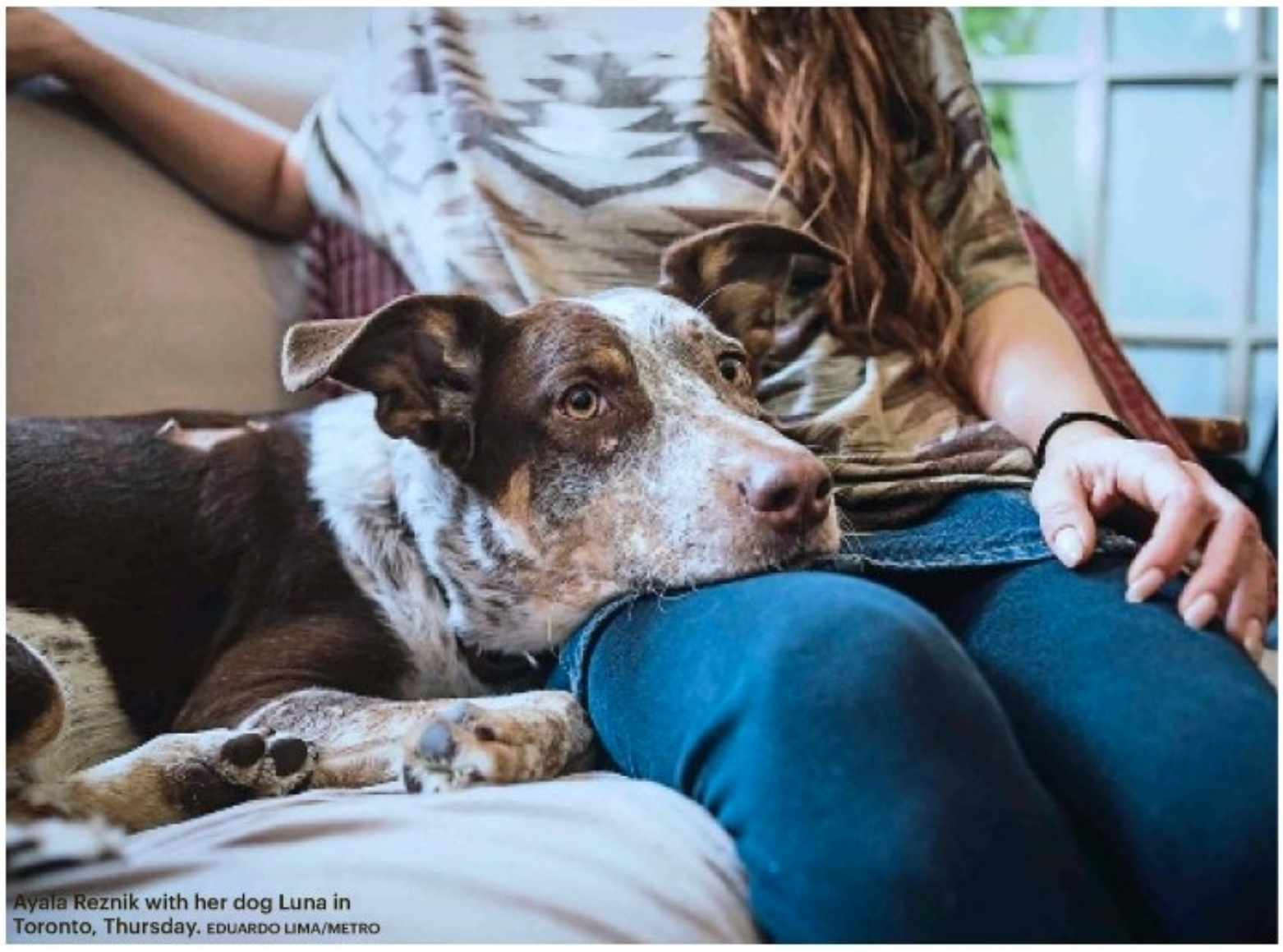

Ayala Reznik with her dog Luna in Toronto, Thursday. EDUARDO LIMA/METRO

VICKY MOCHAMA

Here's the truth about reconciliation: We don't need to wait on the feds

Of the 94 Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation committee, historian Ian Mosby says only five have been completed.

Of those, only two have come at the hands of the federal government. And the record stood at only one until Thursday, when Prime Minister Trudeau announced $10 million in funding for the National Council of Reconciliation.

It's hardly inspiring progress a full year after the committee issued its recommendations.

For Mosby, there are urgent issues that need immediate action, like education funding and aboriginal health, and there is a lot left for the federal government to do.

There's also a big role non-indigenous Torontonians can play in being part of reconciliation.

The Bata Shoe Museum's indigenous shoemaking collection, for example, offers a look at indigenous histories through footwear. Go check it out.

For those staying on their feet, the First Story app offers an Aboriginal overview of Toronto. Visit some of the places it includes.

For even more active Torontonians, the Native American Indigenous Games are coming to Toronto next July. Volunteers are needed to make it happen.

Bridging the past with the present will, after all, take knowledge. As Mosby put it: "The first thing that Canadians can do is read and know the calls to action. Part of holding organizations and governments to account is people knowing the calls to action."

Regardless of the federal government's record, there are countless institutions in the city working to respond to the committee's calls.

One of the calls to action pushes for health-care practitioners to include Aboriginal healing practices for Aboriginal patients.

Since 2011, St. Michael's Hospital has had an Aboriginal health community advisory panel. With the group's work, the hospital has established two roles to help Aboriginal patients through the hospital process.

Continued on page 6

TORONTO DEADLY STREETS | THE SOUND OF PROGRESS: THE CITY IS INSTALLING 56 SIGNALS TO HELP BLIND PEDESTRIANS metroNEWS

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Friday, December 16, 2016

TORONTO'S DEADLY STREETS THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Metro launched its Toronto's Deadly Streets campaign in June with the goal of making road safety a priority at city hall. This week, we look back on how far Toronto has come on the issue — **and the role our coverage played.**

Accessible signals at 56 intersections

ACTION IN 2016

- ☑ **Lower speed limits on 14 streets**
- ☑ **14 dangerous intersections redesigned**
- ☑ **More time to cross at 37 intersections**
- ☑ **56 signals to help people with visual impairments**

Making a difference Thanks to the city's expanded road safety plan, more accessible pedestrian signals have been installed at intersections across Toronto. The devices provide audible crossing signals for people with visual impairments. EDUARDO LIMA/METRO

Luke Simcoe
Metro | Toronto

When Daniella Levy-Pinto walks around Toronto, she plans her route based on where she can find accessible pedestrian signals.

The signals provide audible cues to pedestrians with visual impairments. For Levy-Pinto, who is blind, they mean the difference between crossing safely or not.

"I choose routes where I know I can find them, even if it means walking a long distance," she said, noting that without them, something as simple as crossing the road becomes "a guessing game."

Fortunately, for Levy-Pinto and others like her, the city is accelerating plans to make intersections more accessible. Since June, the city has installed 56 new signals, and the new road safety plan vows to add the devices to 20 new intersections a year.

"The city's goal should be to have them everywhere where there's a traffic light, in order to convey the same information to blind pedestrians," Levy-Pinto said.

An accessibility advocate with Walk Toronto, Levy-Pinto says the city also needs to standardize the location of the special signals. She's trained her guide dog to spot them, she said, but others with visual impairments can have difficulty finding them if they're not right next to the crosswalk.

And in the wintertime, the poles can become blocked by snow, she said.

One simple solution, Levy-Pinto said, would be to make the audio signals automatic. At present, users have to hold the button down for a few seconds to trigger them.

"What I've seen in other cities, like New York and San Francisco, is that they're automatic. The light changes and the sound starts. It's simple."

<< THE METRO EFFECT >>

Safety can't be ignored

Daniella Levy-Pinto, an accessibility advocate with Walk Toronto, said Metro's Deadly Streets series made pedestrian and cyclist safety something politicians and the public "could no longer ignore."

"You reported on every single collision," she said. "I think Metro did a wonderful job in putting this issue at the forefront of the public conversation and not letting people forget about it."

As a vocal advocate for safer streets, Levy-Pinto said she's noticed more people are "engaged" on road safety, and she credited Metro in part for that awareness.

"The challenge now is to reach the people who still don't believe this is an urgent issue," she said.

> **"The city's goal should be to have them everywhere where there's a traffic light, in order to convey the same information to blind pedestrians.** Daniella Levy-Pinto

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Arts hub vs. taxes

URBAN PLANNING

Assessment could be end of 401 Richmond, a cultural gem

401 Richmond, a long-standing downtown haven for dozens of non-profit arts and culture organizations, is grappling with a property tax increase in January likely to cripple the many tenants it has long sheltered from skyrocketing market rents.

In a matter of weeks, tenants will see their property tax bill, which they pay to the city separately from rent to building owner Urbanspace, jump by about 60 per cent. By the end of the current assessment period in 2020, taxes will have nearly tripled from today, threatening the heritage building's status as a vital cultural hub.

"There are those who would look at a company like Urbanspace, which believes in the creative community and has actively supported it for 23 years, and think maybe they deserve some kind of break," says David Plant, executive director of Trinity Square Video, one of many non-profit artist-run centres in 401 Richmond.

In the 23 years since Urbanspace, the property management company owned by Margie Zeidler, bought and refitted the old factory, 401 Richmond has evolved into one of the city's biggest cultural institutions.

Trinity Square Video is just one such organization to make its home here. With most subsisting on a shrinking pool of public grants, a hit to their operating capital could necessitate a move.

"When I saw our assessment, I thought, 'That's it — the game's over. Our tenants will never be able to afford this,'" Zeidler said. Her frustration is widely shared by local politicians.

"401 Richmond is the heart of the vision of what we, as a city, saw for King-Spadina, and what it was supposed to become," said Joe Cressy, the city councillor for Trinity-Spadina.

Trinity Square Video's David Plant is concerned about the future of 401 Richmond. P. MOCZULSKI/FOR TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Blame the area's red-hot real estate and the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC), an agency of the provincial government, which assesses property value based on one measure only: the market's "highest and best use."

That said, MPAC is open to appeal, and Zeidler has applied for reconsideration. Greg Martino, the Toronto director for MPAC, said that it was reviewing the "unique characteristics and facts related to this property."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

PEEL

Police chief, board on collision course

Peel police chief Jennifer Evans has spent much of the year battling the board that oversees her on issues such as carding, which she refused to stop. Now, with her contract up for renewal next year, and a community restless for change, some close to the situation say a collision is looming over the future of policing in two of Canada's largest cities.

The latest controversy is a $21 million lawsuit launched against Evans, alleging she "all but guaranteed" a policing career to a bystander who was shot by a Peel officer. The suit names the Peel Police Board board as a defendant. Board chair Amrik Ahluwalia did not rule out an internal investigation of Evans.

The Peel Police Board has called for radical changes like the suspension of carding, only to watch the chief refuse the request, arguing that the board did not have jurisdiction.

"The chief is accountable to the board," responds Ahluwalia.

In the spring, citing a glaring underrepresentation of women and visible minorities in the force, including in the senior officer ranks, the board called a sweeping equity-diversity audit.

Peel Police Chief Jennifer Evans. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Evans, senior officers and the rank and file blasted the board for the way they felt the audit decision was handled.

Recently, the board voted to bring decision-making for the police budget into the open.

Evans was asked what she plans to do to meet the board's expectation of reducing the police budget. She did not respond.

Asked if Evans will be part of the board's future when it makes a decision in the spring on whether or not to renew the chief's contract, Ahluwalia said, "We're committed to the board's success … We have an environment which is challenging things that have gone unchallenged for 40 years." TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Education key to moving forward

Continued from page 1

The legal community, too, has been tasked with making changes to improve their relationship with Aboriginal Canadians. The Law Society of Upper Canada is preparing a framework for Aboriginal issues as a response to the Truth and Reconciliation report.

"It's one of our major priorities," said treasurer Paul Schabas.

Throughout the report, education is a key component.

Schabas highlighted the society's new certified specialization on indigenous issues, which was created in consultation with indigenous and legal organizations over the last year. At the Toronto District School Board, the Aboriginal Education Centre provides resources for indigenous students. TDSB is the largest school board in Canada and, like many public institutions, the district starts each day with an acknowledgement of indigenous lands.

And, at city hall, Mayor John Tory has promised to appoint an indigenous person in 2017 to coordinate the city's efforts at reconciliation and towards indigenous people.

Toronto has the largest urban indigenous population in the country, and it's important for the city to take a leading role in righting past wrongs.

Key to making that happen is remembering that every citizen has a role to play.

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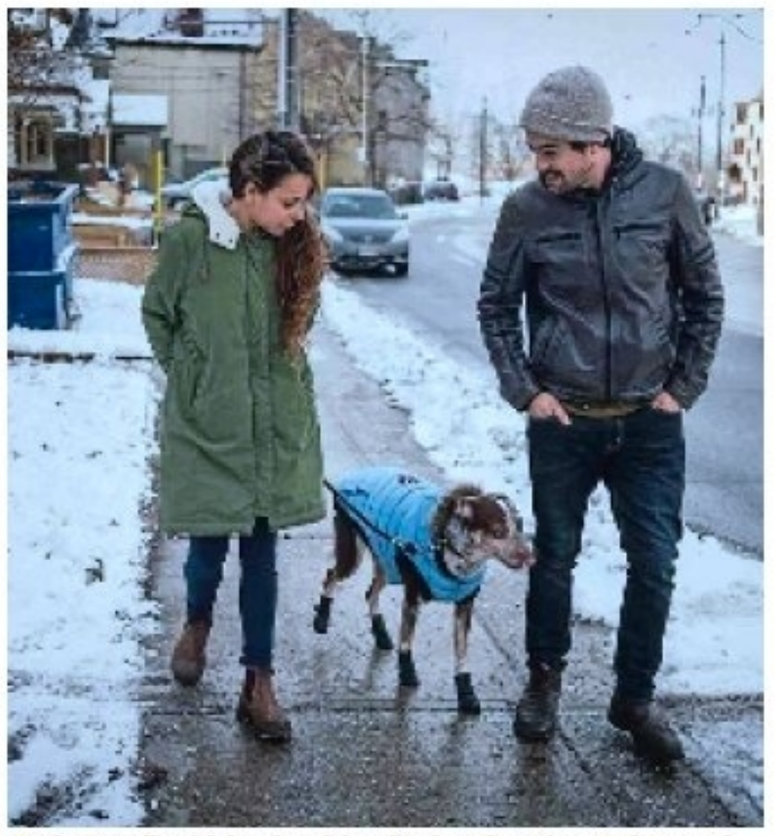

Ayala Reznik with her boyfriend Sebastian Diaz-Molaro and her dog Luna on Thursday. EDUARDO LIMA/METRO

A very well train-ed dog

PETS

Happy-go-Lucky pooch Luna survives after scare on GO line

Luke Simcoe
Metro | Toronto

Luna the dog is dog-gone lucky.

The precocious pup, an Australian Shepherd-Border Collie mix, was hit by a GO train Dec. 7 on the Lakeshore West line. Despite being pulled under the vehicle, she survived unscathed.

"It's a miracle," Luna's owner, Ayla Reznick, said. "I can't even imagine my life without Luna right now."

Luna slipped her leash while out for a walk in Parkdale. The dog walker tried to pursue her, Reznick said, but the pooch bolted.

Aided by members of the Lost and Found Pets of Ontario Facebook group, Reznick scoured the neighbourhood but didn't find Luna.

"I was just trying to stay positive. I knew if I cried, I would consume my energy and not be able to search," she said.

Luna eventually returned home on her own, and aside from a few mysterious scrapes and bruises, she was no worse for wear. She was given a clean bill of health from the vet the following day, Reznick said.

It wasn't until later that Reznick learned Luna's brief adventure nearly cost the dog her life. A GO train operator named Jonathan Podzyhun reached out to her on Facebook, saying he was on board when the train hit a dog matching Luna's description. He was certain the dog had died.

"He was shocked and amazed that she was alright," Reznick said.

According to Reznick, Podzyhun told her the newer GO trains are a bit higher than older models, which could explain how Luna escaped harm. He also suspected a backpack the dog was wearing might have protected her.

> **Luna is our Christmas miracle.**
> Metrolinx spokeswoman Anne Marie Aikins

Podzyhun was so impressed by Luna's luck, he arranged to meet Reznick and the dog on Wednesday. He stopped by Reznick's apartment, dog treats in hand, and gave Luna some cuddles.

"It was super nice of him to try and contact us," Reznick said. "He's so generous."

As for Luna, her brush with mortality hasn't dampened her playful spirits.

"She just happy to be home, and she wishes all the other dog owners out there will give their pets lots of treats and hugs for the holidays," Reznick said.

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Racism 'is not a new phenomenon'

Metro readers share their own stories in response to editor's encounter with a prejudiced stranger

Irene Kuan, Metro's managing editor, digital, at Union Station on Wednesday.
LANCE MCMILLAN/METRO

Metro editor Irene Kuan's story of being told to "go back to Hong Kong" at Union Station sparked dozens of people to share similar experiences, issue calls for action and offer words of encouragement. This is what some of you told us in response to the story in Thursday's paper.

Last weekend, while I was waiting for the subway, a man started to harass a Chinese woman and her daughter, who must have been 12 or 13 years old. He was throwing food at them and yelling terrible, hurtful, racist things. The woman and her daughter moved down the platform towards me, the man followed them, continuing to spew hate.

I want to encourage everyone to help if and when you can. The passive stance we may choose to take against hate and discrimination only legitimizes and perpetuates it. Even if you don't feel comfortable engaging with the threat, just talking with the victim and letting them know that you are there to help if they need it might make them feel better.
Jennifer Slabodkin

Not surprised. Some lady screamed at my uncle, calling him a "Paki" and telling him to move out of her way last week. He's Portuguese so he personally found it funny, but still.
Chantel Marie

Welcome to reality Canada.

This is not a new phenomena brought on by the U.S. election. I've lived in Toronto over 20 years and I have been called the "n" word more times here than in England, where I was born. I'm 56.

I try not to let it impact me because I enjoy interacting with people of all races. In my mind I have to believe there are some nice people still out there.
Jenny

I'm from Brazil and I'm studying English in Toronto.

I'd like to say that I've seen similar cases on downtown streets. Many people look at foreigners with much displeasure. That's too bad for all. … I hope this Christmas the person who treated you with insults acknowledges their mistake and apologizes for their act.
Adler de Souza Lima

Deplorable. I can't fathom people who think that way. Closed-minded simpletons.
Karen Durrie

Metro ain't having it

You can read Irene Kuan's account and more response from readers at metronews.ca.

Have you seen or been targeted by racist outbursts? How did you react? Share your experiences via **readers@metronews.ca** or tweet using the hashtag #ainthavingit.

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The secret marathon

AFGHANISTAN

Film explores hurdles women runners face

One woman was forbidden to run in the marathon by her father.

Another trained at her university before it was bombed by the Taliban, leaving her with nowhere to practise.

And a third pushed aside years of national tension and came from abroad to support her fellow runners.

These are the stories of three women who ran in the second Marathon of Afghanistan in November, the subject of a documentary by a Toronto-based filmmaker about the challenges facing women who want to run in a country long shaken by conflict and where women's activities can be heavily restricted.

"Essentially, for the average woman in Afghanistan, it's not safe for them to run outside in the streets like we can here," The Secret Marathon's director Kate McKenzie said. McKenzie is a digital media master's student at Ryerson University.

Filmmaker Kate McKenzie poses with her coach, Martin Parnell, and other female runners who took part in the second Marathon of Afghanistan in November. McKenzie's film, The Secret Marathon, explores the challenges women who want to run in Afghanistan face. THE SECRET MARATHON

"There's still a lot of gender discrimination. When a woman goes to run, people might throw stones at her or insult her or feel like, because she's running, that means she is a woman who doesn't have good morals or things like that ... and so, as a result, they've had to train in their backyards."

McKenzie, also a runner, said she learned about the marathon through her coach Martin Parnell, who was planning on running it and asked if she would edit the photos and videos he was going to take on his phone.

"And I was like, 'Martin, this story is way too incredible. I want to come with you,'" she recalled.

McKenzie flew to the central Afghan province of Bamyan earlier this year with her camera operator and sound technician to document the sold-out marathon, where 14 out of 100 runners were women — up from only three at last year's inaugural event.

And this year, nine of the female participants were Afghan, a ninefold increase from last year's solo female Afghan runner. McKenzie, who had never run a marathon before, was one of the international participants.

The Secret Marathon primarily focuses on the stories of three of the female runners and their journeys to get to the start line: Nelofar, a young Afghan woman who had been forbidden to run last year's marathon by her father but came back in 2016 with five other women in tow; Kubra, who had trained at Kabul's American University of Afghanistan before it was attacked in August; and Mahsa, an Iranian who came to support the Afghan runners and "build a bridge" between cultures.

McKenzie's experience running her first marathon and overcoming her own challenges also features prominently throughout the film.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

ART GALLERY OF MISSISSAUGA

The Recipe Project helps newcomers

Whether it is the Palestinian grape leaves filled with rice, Venezuelan cheese sticks, Sudanese meat sauce or beef-stuffed vegetables from Syria, immigrants' homemade dishes all come with a story.

For many newcomers, the aroma and taste of the dishes they grew up with help them relive their childhood memories with their families and connect with the past they left behind for a new life in Canada.

"I miss my mom's stuffed grape leaves a lot. I am so far away and can't see my family in the Saida-EinElHelwi (refugee) camp," said Mahmoud Kassem, 36, a Palestinian nurse who was born stateless in Lebanon and came to Canada as a refugee last year.

"My mom made this dish every Friday. The whole family, some 45 people, would get around the dining table to enjoy it. But we may never be altogether to eat it again. The dish is the only thing I have to remember my mom and everyone back there."

To keep those memories alive and pass on the traditions to their offspring, Kassem and other newcomers taking English classes at the Catholic Crosscultural Services in Mississauga are sharing their beloved recipes — and stories — in an innovative project that enriches their language and cultural learning experience.

In their own handwriting, the students put their recipes and stories onto a template before a fabric printer made them into placemats.

The Recipe Project, a collaboration of the immigrant settlement agency and the Art Gallery of Mississauga, is the brainchild of Marianne Alas, a textile artist and food-lover. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Mahmoud Kassem, 36, came to Canada last year. His recipe is for stuffed grape leaves. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Ultimate model shown♦

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New chair vows to regain trust

YORK REGION

Embattled school board hopes to move past scandals

Loralea Carruthers' first act as chair of the York Region District School Board was to clear the air.

At a board meeting this week, the newly elected trustee chair for East Gwillimbury and Whitchurch-Stouffville, who ousted long-time chair Anna DeBartolo last week, spoke openly about the controversy and turmoil plaguing the province's third largest school board over the past year and vowed to turn things around.

"I want to be candid: as a board, we have a lot of work to do to regain the public's trust," she said in her remarks Tuesday. "Tonight's meeting needs to be a pivot point away from the problems of the past, so we start the new year resolved to live up to the public's expectations of us as a board of trustees."

Reports have emerged over the past year about controversies at the board, including the director's unprecedented 10-year contract, repeated and unexplained trustee travel to Europe and numerous complaints of racism and Islamophobia by parents, which led to intervention by Ontario's education minister, who has asked for a response to some of these concerns by Jan. 13.

Carruthers said all of these issues have to be addressed and dealt with directly.

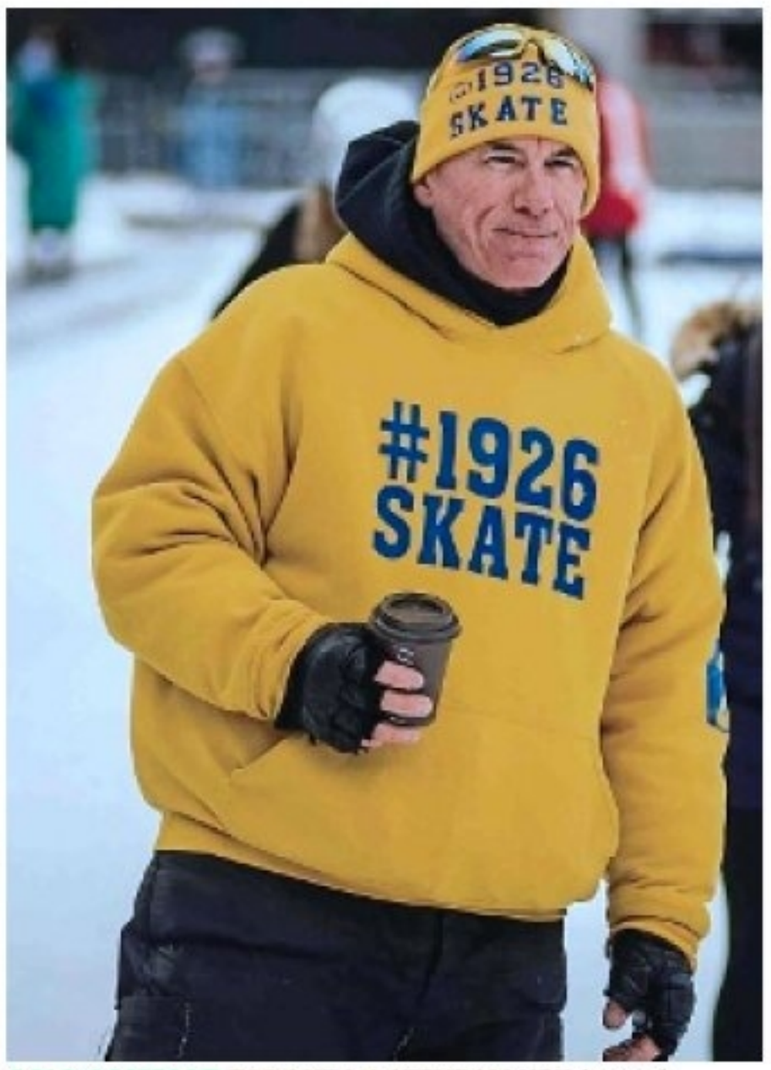
"Hundreds of community leaders, parents and educators have called for change. The minister of education herself has expressed her serious concerns," she said. "I want to be very clear: There is no place for racism or any other form of discrimination in this board, from anyone.

"We have policies around equity and inclusion, and these must be upheld to the highest standard," she continued. "When we see racism, we must speak up immediately and strongly."

Carruthers' comments come just days after the board confirmed it was investigating allegations that a long-time trustee for Georgina, Nancy Elgie, had referred to a black parent with a racial epithet. The board has hired a lawyer to investigate the matter and a report is due back before the new year.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

> "There is no place for racism or any other form of discrimination in this board, from anyone."
> Loralea Carruthers



COLD COMFORT TORONTO'S STEVE MCNEIL braved freezing temperatures at Nathan Phillips Square on Thursday to skate for 19 hours and 26 minutes straight in honour of his mother Thursday. Born in 1926, she struggled with dementia for 15 years. He's raising money and awareness.

EDUARDO LIMA/METRO

CITY COUNCIL

Garbage, water fees increased

Toronto homeowners will pay an average of five per cent more for water and two per cent more for garbage pickup in 2017.

City council gave final approval Wednesday to the "rate-supported" budget.

The much bigger — and thornier — operating and capital budgets will not be passed until February.

Councillors voted to increase the combined water and wastewater consumption charges by 5 per cent, bumping the average residential bill from $914 this year to $960 next year.

That follows years of eight-per-cent and nine-per-cent hikes to fund upgrades in the aging water treatment system and to improve the storm sewer system after significant basement flooding became a problem ion the city.

Under the plan, council is expected next year to pass another five-per-cent hike for 2018.

Toronto homeowners will pay, on average, an extra two per cent for waste collection, below next year's expected rate of inflation. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Slow Braised Pot Roast Puttanesca

Ingredients

- 3 to 4 lb (1 1/2 to 2kg) beef chuck roast, trimmed of excess fat
- Salt and freshly-ground pepper
- 3 (45ml) Tbsp olive oil
- 1 cup (250ml) dry red wine
- 1 cup (250) beef stock
- 530ml (550g) Authentica World Cuisine Puttanesca Sauce
- 2 onions, quartered
- 8 carrots, diced into 1-inch (2.5cm) cubes
- 2 celery sticks, 1/2-inch thick sliced
- 2 cups (500ml) button mushrooms
- 2 bay leaves

Instructions

Season the roast with salt and pepper. Heat the olive oil in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add the roast and sear on all sides until brown. Scatter the vegetables and add the bay leaves. Saute until the onions start to become translucent. Add the red wine, beef stock and the Puttanesca Sauce. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low. Simmer for 3 hours, basting every hour with the sauce, until the beef is fork tender.

Remove the roast, slice and arrange on a warm serving platter. Garnish with the vegetables. Serve with the sauce.

Serves 6 to 8

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#METROARTSCHALLENGE

Your captivating captions

Our readers' impressions of this silly holiday scene had us in stitches

GENNA BUCK/METRO

Um...Mom? I found cousin Billy.
Barb Griffin

I hope you kept the receipt!
Dave Godden

Mom! I keep shaking it ... I don't hear any change rattling!
L.N.A. Pierre

I don't know what kind of Pokemon this is, but I asked Santa for a Pikachu.
Sara Imrie

Great. Responsibility. Just what I always wanted. Casey Palmer

I hope this thing craps out iPhones or its getting re-gifted. D. Dailly

MOM!!! Santa hates me!
Tim Samson

I said 'a baby dog' not baby Doug.
Joon Baik

WINNER

I will officially shop for my own present next year.
Hue Huynh

WHAT!!! There are no batteries or instructions with this thing. Rob Clark

Honey, Santa dropped off the wrong package again!
Denise Badley

Aw, come on, I asked for an Xbox!
Jesse Kline, 9

I asked Santa for a Hatchimal, not a hatched male.
Linda Skarott

This is not what I was expecting when you said 'kinder surprise.'
Ryan Murphy

You don't expect me to keep this creepy thing next to my bed, do you?
L.N.A. Pierre

YOUR NEXT CHALLENGE

There's no new challenge this week — take a break for the holidays! — but stay tuned next week for something super special. Thanks for your tsunami of support during the first year of the #MetroArtsChallenge. We can't wait to see the art you share with us in 2017.

I wanted the Jack-in-the-box with the windy thing on it!!
Alex Hachey

Mom! I told you... I'm a VEGAN now!
Noah Bush

Worst. Gender Reveal. Ever.
Jason Buller

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METRO EXPLAINS

What the asbestos ban means

May Warren
Metro | Toronto

On Thursday the federal government announced a plan to ban manufacturing any products containing asbestos, and its import or export by 2018.

Metro breaks down the news and what it means for you.

What is it?

Asbestos refers to a group of minerals that, at its peak, was found in more than 3,000 applications around the world.

Why is it dangerous?

The World Health Organization declared asbestos a "human carcinogen" way back in 1987. Even small amounts of airborne asbestos fibres can cause lung cancer and a disease called asbestosis.

So there's a ban, yay us?

Canada is late to the game on the issue. Our last asbestos mine closed in 2011, but more than 50 nations have already banned the carcinogen. The government's move comes after decades of lobbying from labour groups, and people who have died or lost loved ones.

What else?

The government pledges to create new health and safety regulations to limit contact workers have with existing asbestos on the job, and expand the online list of buildings containing asbestos that it owns or rents.

POLITICS

Trudeau happy to talk fundraising

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau says he has no problem with answering questions from ethics commissioner Mary Dawson about his party's controversial fundraising tactics.

Trudeau has been under fire in the Commons for weeks over a series of private, $1,500-a-ticket Liberal party fundraisers with well-heeled donors.

Interim Conservative leader Rona Ambrose has said the so-called "cash-for-access" practice smacks of corruption and asked Dawson to investigate.

A Globe and Mail report said Dawson agreed to question Trudeau on the issue to determine whether a more comprehensive investigation is warranted.

Justin Trudeau CANADIAN PRESS

A spokeswoman for Dawson's office would not confirm the report Thursday.

Trudeau has been pilloried in question period by the opposition because of a list of rules he handed out to his cabinet on taking office, warning ministers away from offering preferential access or even creating the perception of such access for party donors. However, with the Commons adjourned to the end of January, that public pressure has eased for the moment.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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scix.science.yorku.ca/york-science-saturdays

Fire officials attend the scene of a house fire on Oneida Nation of the Thames reserve on Thursday.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

Family believed dead in house fire

ONTARIO

First Nation community struggling with the loss

A father, three young children and a baby are believed to have died in a fire that destroyed their home and ripped apart this First Nation community amid efforts Thursday to recover and identify the charred remains of the victims.

Shocked community leaders and residents struggled to come to terms with the devastating loss that occurred about 12 hours after a blaze in Port Colborne, Ont., also claimed the lives of four family members.

"We've only started to understand what has happened," Randall Phillips, chief of the Oneida Nation of the Thames, said Thursday. "Our community is suffering. There's not a person in this community that doesn't know one of the victims or the victims' family."

> **We've only started to understand what has happened.**
> Randall Phillips

Relatives of the dead were in shock, and heart-broken, Phillips said, adding that a forensic anthropologist had only managed to identify the remains of the adult and one of the children.

A man who said he was a brother of the deceased father shooed photographers from the blackened frame of the house on the edge of the town as firefighters and investigators worked in the wreckage of the home.

Firefighters arriving on the scene in frigid temperatures at about 11 a.m. Wednesday could do little more than douse the flames, which took about two hours. The cause remained under investigation.

Phillips, who said the two-storey home was old and "just basically kindling," lashed out at the federal government for rejecting the community's plea for funding to upgrade 50 of its houses, saying First Nations housing is in crisis.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

SASKATCHEWAN

Prison riot leaves inmate dead

Jason Leonard Bird FACEBOOK

A riot involving 185 prisoners at a prison in northern Saskatchewan has left one inmate dead, eight prisoners injured and a large part of the institution uninhabitable.

Correctional Service Canada spokesman Jeff Campbell said the riot at the Saskatchewan Penitentiary in Prince Albert started Wednesday in the medium-security unit, which houses 377 prisoners.

"They set up barricades. They lit some fires. There was also an assault on some inmates, one of whom has unfortunately died from his injuries," Campbell said Thursday in a phone interview.

The dead inmate, Jason Leonard Bird, was 43 and had been serving a sentence of two years and seven months since February for break and enter and theft convictions.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli performs in Budapest, Hungary on Nov. 5. Bocelli has been confirmed as a performer at president-elect Donald Trump's inauguration. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

We ignore dual realities at our peril

Rosemary Westwood relocates from Canada to the U.S. She chronicles her observations in a weekly column for Metro.

ROSEMARY WESTWOOD
From the U.S.

For a minute there, it appeared as if the only star president-elect Donald Trump could scrounge up to sing at his inauguration was the runner-up in 2010's America's Got Talent, Jackie Evancho.

Not exactly in keeping with the Trump Hotel motto "Never Settle."

And it felt so right. Who could possibly want to serenade into power the most dangerous president elected in my lifetime? Who could want to sing those myth-making lyrics "land of the free" to a man in favour of voter suppression and media suppression, deporting an entire religion and jailing innocents, a man who takes his leadership cues from Vladimir Putin, who lies to his supporters in order to cement his own power?

The answer, it turns out, is Andrea Bocelli. I'll never hear that duet with Celine Dion the same way again.

It's still a bit gratifying to know that most of Hollywood, whose opinions I care little about otherwise, is MIA on this one.

Of course, Donald Trump's own celebrity has never really translated into widespread celebrity political love. (Aside from Kanye West's less-than-gushing support, Alec, the lesser of the Baldwins, and the actress from Clueless who wasn't Cher or Tai.)

But the lack of Hollywood support certainly didn't bother Trump's base, who seem to view celebrities (minus Trump himself) as de facto "elites" (a term now devoid of meaning, since it also appears to apply to every New Yorker, including nearly half of the city that's living in or near poverty).

Indeed, some might not care who sings about "the rockets' red glare" this time. What looks bad from where I'm sitting, clearly, looks completely different to someone who voted for Trump.

That acceptance comes with a few requirements.

The first is to remember that while I'm rolling my eyes at reports in the Daily Beast that Trump wanted Aretha Franklin to sing for him (Aretha?!), some of Trump's 46 per cent of the U.S. electorate are reading on Breitbart that President Obama's investigation into Russian hacking is just sour grapes after the Democrats lost the election.

There are two American realities, and we ignore the one we're not living in at our own peril.

Which brings us to the other requirement: Anyone outraged at the election results has some studying to do. Go read Fox News. Browse Red State. Click on a few Breitbart links. Even, God forbid, peruse Info Wars.

The day after the election, On The Media's Brooke Gladstone argued the radio show — which reports on the media — has a new goal: "To make what seems to have been invisible to us and everyone we know, visible."

It's a worthy goal for us all.

Syrians who were evacuated from rebel-held neighbourhoods arrive in Khan al-Aassal region, in west Aleppo. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

East Aleppo's residents flee

Evacuation seals the fate of the rebellion's key stronghold

Weeping, hobbling on crutches or dragging suitcases, hundreds of survivors of a devastating government bombardment and siege left the last sliver of opposition-held Aleppo on Thursday, an evacuation that sealed the end of the rebellion's most important stronghold and was a watershed moment in Syria's five-year-old civil war.

A smiling President Bashar Assad called it a historic event comparable to the birth of Christ and the revelation of the Qur'an.

A UN official described it as "a black chapter in the history of international relations."

Under a surrender deal brokered by Russia and Turkey, tens of thousands of residents and rebel fighters are being evacuated to opposition-controlled areas in the surrounding countryside.

Eastern Aleppo rose in revolt against Assad in 2012 and battled since then with the western, government-held part of the city in one of the most horrific and destructive fronts of the civil war.

The rebels' hold in Syria's one-time commercial powerhouse was a major point of pride, and at times it seemed an invulnerable part of what was once a growing opposition-held patch of territory in the north.

But government forces finally surrounded eastern Aleppo and then battered it to pieces. The air and ground campaign by Syrian troops — backed by Russian warplanes and forces from Assad's regional allies — relentlessly wore away at the enclave.

Hundreds of civilians were killed, and tens of thousands fled to government-held areas. The pocket was reduced to a few blocks packed with the bloodied, exhausted and demoralized but also die-hard opposition forces.

"History is being made," an upbeat Assad proclaimed in a video. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

VOICES OF THE DISPLACED

As they find safety, displaced residents from the devastated east of the city describe violence and food shortages to the UNHCR.

We had a house, but it was completely destroyed. It was very shocking to see our home turned to ruins. Bader, 12,

I am very scared of what the future might hold for us, and especially for my daughters.
Aziza, a single mother in her late thirties

We used to be given bags of bread, but then bread stopped and there was just rice. Then there was no rice and the prices of food became so expensive.
Mohammad, 16

SOURCE: UNHCR

RESEARCH

Global warming's prints on weird weather cases

A new scientific report finds man-made climate change played some role in two dozen extreme weather events last year but not in a few other weird weather instances around the world.

An annual report released Thursday by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration found climate change was a factor, however small or large, in 24 of 30 strange weather events. They include 11 cases of high heat, as well as unusual winter sunshine in the United Kingdom, Alaskan wildfires and odd "sunny day" flooding in Miami.

The study documented climate change-goosed weather in Alaska, Washington state, the southeastern United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, China, Japan, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, the western north Pacific cyclone region, India, Pakistan, Egypt, Ethiopia and southern Africa.

"It has to be measurable. It has to be detectable," said NOAA scientist Stephanie Herring, co-editor of the report.

> **It has to be measurable. It has to be detectable.**
> Stephanie Herring

In six cases — including cold snaps in the U.S. and downpours in Nigeria and India — the scientists could not detect climate change's effects. Other scientists, though, disputed that finding for the cold snap that hit the Northeast.

Herring highlighted the Miami flooding in September 2015. Because of rising sea levels and sinking land, extremely high tides flooded the streets with 22 inches of water.

"This one is just very remarkable because truly, not a cloud in the sky, and these types of tidal nuisance flooding events are clearly become more frequent," she said. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

metro SCIENCE

Your essential daily news

No bones about it: Evolutionary biologists believe humans lack the penis bone our direct ancestors have because we spend less time having sex

DECODED by Genna Buck and Andrés Plana

DINOSAURS REALLY DID HAVE FEATHERS

A Chinese scientist browsing a market in Myanmar has stumbled onto **the find of the century.** What first appeared to be a fragment of a bird's tail suspended in 99-million-year old amber in fact belongs to a coelurosaur — a feathered, sparrow-sized dinosaur. **But what is amber and where does it get its enchanting ability to capture an ancient moment and freeze it in time?**

Amber starts out as sticky tree resin. Over many years, a series of chemical reactions turns hardened resin into glassy amber. Smelly, reactive chemicals, called volatiles, dissipate, and the rings of hydrogen and carbon that remain arrange themselves into long chains of molecules called polymers. Once the volatiles are gone and the **polymerization** is complete, the resin, sometimes with debris or dead critters trapped inside, is amber.

Fair feather find

Using microscopes and a CT scanner, scientists at the Royal Saskatchewan Museum were the first to ever see dinosaur feathers in glorious 3D. They're white and brown, and more delicately structured than modern bird feathers, lacking the strong central rod.

As a result, this dino probably couldn't fly: a clue feathers may have first evolved for a purpose other than flight. Unlike in birds, the tail's **vertebrae were not fused into one bone,** but segmented and able to bend in several places at once.

Who was this dinosaur?

A pocket-sized member of the T. rex's family, **coelurosauria**. It walked upright and feasted on insects.

Sorry, Jurassic Park fans, scientists are pretty sure **dino DNA can't survive in amber**. Earlier experiments that suggested this was possible seem to have picked up stray DNA from the lab.

FINDINGS
Your week in science

SUMUKHA J. N.

MAGIC MENAGERIE
Scientists have been known to give goofy names to genes (sonic hedgehog) and animals (Pieza kake). Now J.K. Rowling has given her seal of approval to another silly-sounding species: Eriovixia gryffindori, a spider that looks remarkably like the Hogwarts sorting hat.

SAD ZIKA STUDY
The most detailed study yet of pregnant women in Brazil with confirmed Zika virus has revealed a scary truth: more than half had a miscarriage, stillbirth, or baby with a devastating brain abnormality.

SOUND SMART

NOMENCLATURE

DEFINITION
Nomenclature is a scientific system for naming and categorizing something, like chemical compounds, animals or time periods. Biologists use binomial nomenclature (genus and species in italics) for living things like *Homo sapiens*.

USE IT IN A SENTENCE
The international community should adopt formal **nomenclature** for Pokemon. Their names are cutesy and random; they don't provide any useful information.

CITIZEN SCIENTIST by Genna Buck

Why doesn't the sun fry the earth?

The sun injects a lot of energy into Earth, yet the temperature here is relatively stable. The Earth must be losing a similar amount of heat. How does that work? — Dexter

You're right. The Earth absorbs radiation from the sun and releases a similar amount out into space. But not exactly the same amount. And that's a problem.

Solar energy is constantly being soaked up and spat back out by the land and oceans. Some is reflected by clouds and bright surfaces like polar ice caps, and some is absorbed by the cosy blanket of **greenhouse gases** that surrounds our planet. They keep the atmosphere at an average of 14 C, warmer than it otherwise would be (-18 C, the temperature on the atmosphere-less moon).

All in all, our planet exists in a state of **energy balance**. I think of it as a bathtub with the plug pulled and the tap on: We experience a consistent, comfortable temperature level because solar energy is pouring in and draining out at the same rate. At least, that's what's supposed to happen.

You may have heard something about how we're pouring more and more greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide and methane into the air by burning fossil fuels and raising animals.

These gases have atoms are loosely bound together, and when they heat up, they vibrate and move around. They release the energy as heat, which other greenhouse gases absorb. This continuous process of passing heat back and forth between molecules keeps more of the sun's energy close to the Earth, with familiar consequences: Rising mercury, rising oceans, and doomsday if we don't do anything about it.

This process, **the greenhouse effect**, is also the reason the ocean isn't frozen. It sure is harder to deny something is real when you learn the details of how it works.

Science Question?
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That first flash of the Force...

IN FOCUS

A long time ago, in a galaxy not too far away, we were all wowed

Richard Crouse
For Metro Canada

February 3, 1959 and February 9, 1964. The day the music died and the date it was reborn on the Ed Sullivan Show, both days burned into the collective memories of pop culture fanatics everywhere.

But what about May 25, 1977?

If you were a teenager then chances are you felt the earth shift. It was the day Star Wars opened, kicking off a cultural phenomenon that continues to this day.

This weekend the universe George Lucas unleashed in 1977 grows to include Rogue One: A Star Wars Story. Much-anticipated, the movie is the first of the standalone Star Wars Anthology films and is expected to decimate the competition, Death Star style.

Expect line-ups and packed theatres — box office seers estimate it could pull in somewhere between $130 million to $150 million at the U.S. box office this week — but no matter how wild the weekend gets, nothing will match the pandemonium that greeted Star Wars in May, 1977.

To paint a picture of the first blush of Star Wars mania I asked my Facebookers what they remember about that moment a long time ago, in a galaxy (not so) far, far away...

"I remember being so in awe of that legendary opening scene with the giant spaceship coming into picture from the top and filling up the entire screen… oooo, aaaaah," wrote Glenda Fordham. "The audience gasped in unison."

"Upon leaving the theatre, with my little mind totally blown, I was interviewed by the news," recollected Lesley Mitchell-Clarke, "where I think that I said, 'Anything is now possible cinematically.' I was all of 19."

"My stepbrother, who was seven at the time, was dead set against seeing it," says Tina Cooper, "and then of course saw it at least 50 times and dressed in Star Wars gear and played with Star Wars toys every single day for the rest of his childhood."

"The line-up went right around the block and we ended up sitting in the front row of the balcony," recalled Chris Ball "I was mesmerized but dad was bored. Part way through I guess he decided he might as well get comfortable. He took his jacket off and in the process knocked his popcorn over the balcony railing. We got a stern lecture from the manager and almost got thrown out. Fast forward 20 years (1997) and I am now the manager of the same theatre and handing out those stern lectures."

"I was six," remembered Sue Edworthy. "My Dad took me to see it. I fell asleep halfway through. He took me to see it again. I fell asleep halfway through. The seventh time, I finally saw the whole thing. Clearly he had no problem seeing it again, and again, and again."

"It was the first film that I went to more than once in its initial run," said Adrian Gruff. "In the scene where the X-Wings enter the Death Star's trench, I disengaged from the screen just so I could watch everyone's heads do the sideways bob and twist that mine had done on first viewing.

"It was the first time that I had a true inkling as to the energy that religion refers to as 'God.'"

MOVIE RATINGS by Richard Crouse

Rogue One: A Star Wars Story	★★★★
Collateral Beauty	★

HOW RATING WORKS
★★★★ SEE IT
★★★ WORTHWHILE
★★ UP TO YOU
★ SKIP IT

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Rogue One: A Star Wars Story will give another new generation that trademark thrill of facing up to the Force for the very first time. CONTRIBUTED

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Drama touches death, love and grief

FILM DEVELOPMENT

Star-studded cast opened up script to improvement

Richard Crouse
For Metro Canada

Edward Norton, director David Frankel and Will Smith behind the scenes on the set of drama **Collateral Beauty.** BARRY WETCHER

> **Of course Will said, 'God works in mysterious ways.' But Will Smith got his way. Big surprise.**
> David Frankel

Collateral Beauty had a long Hollywood history before director David Frankel came on board. Hugh Jackman was attached at one point and Rachel McAdams had been approached to play a part.

The long development came to an end when Will Smith signed on to play Howard Inlet, a charismatic advertising kingpin who becomes despondent after the death of his six-year-old daughter.

"When I came on it, it felt like it was written in stone," says Frankel. "Everybody loved the screenplay and we were going in three months and then people started whispering, 'I wish we could fix that.' So it turned out to be a pretty normal development process where we tried a lot of stuff.

"Once the actors got involved, Professor Will Smith, Professor Edward Norton and Professor Kate Winslet, there was a lot more writing. Mostly condensing. Edward had this brilliant vision of the movie as a screwball comedy, which I think was really smart. Will always said, 'We have to make the first half of the movie as funny as possible so that we don't kill people.' We worked on that."

The changes continued into the shooting. In the story Howard spends his nights practising self-therapy, writing angry letters to the abstractions of Time, Love and Death demanding answers as to why his child was taken. In the original script he met the abstractions, personified by Jacob Latimore, Keira Knightley and Helen Mirren, in a different order than in the finished film.

"It was written where he first ran into Love, then Time then Death," says Frankel. "We shot them in the order, Death, Time, Love so as we were approaching Love Will and I were still arguing about whether Love should be first or last in the sequence.

"We had prepped for six months up to that moment thinking Love was first. He came to me the day before and said, 'I think Love should be last.' I fought him tooth and nail about it because I really thought that moment on the train when he confronts Death was the pivotal moment and then it rained and because of the weather (the shots) wouldn't have matched. The sequence wouldn't have made sense.

"Of course Will said, 'God works in mysterious ways.' But Will Smith got his way. Big surprise."

The movie details the anguish Howard feels and the steps his friends take to help him reconnect with the world.

"I have seen some pretty profound grief," says Frankel. "My wife lost her mom six years ago and grief really can distort someone's connection to the universe. I learned you don't just get over it. That's why the line Helen (Mirren) has, I think is the most profound line in the movie. 'Nothing is really ever dead if you look at it right.'

"That I thought was really beautiful. That is how we all live on, in memory, not in fact."

It may seem like an odd subject for a Christmas film but Frankel says, "In holiday movies you always want a sense of hope. That's ultimately what we dreamed of for this movie.

"I know when Will saw it for the first time he ran to hug Willow who was in the audience with him. People want to connect and realize the fragility of our time here."

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Join a cult

Not all iconic movies were box-office blockbusters when they were first released. Sometimes it takes a mixture of luck, patience, finding the right audience and big changes in the industry before a film really takes off. Here are four movies that earned cult status against all odds:

CONTRIBUTED BY HOLLYWOOD SUITE

The Rocky Horror Picture Show (1975): Though the stage musical it was based on was a sensation, the movie flopped twice before it became part of the midnight movie craze of the late '70s. Midnight screenings, lax distribution rules, and audience participation went on to make it the longest-running release in film history.

And Now For Something Completely Different (1971): Independently financed by a Playboy executive who was certain Monty Python's Flying Circus could be repackaged for American audiences, this movie proved to be a dud on its initial release. However, once the Monty Python TV show was broadcast on PBS in its original format, the film was re-released to great financial and cultural success among fans eager for more.

Attack of the Killer Tomatoes (1978): This schlock horror parody recouped its modest budget, but was critically panned and didn't make any real box office waves. That is until younger audiences discovered the home video release. The film's second life on video-store shelves generated enough buzz to justify the filming of sequels a decade later, and videogame and cartoon spinoffs in the '90s.

Heavy Metal (1981): This Canadian classic had a respectable box office draw for an animated sci-fi fantasy film based on a counter-culture magazine, but that success was eclipsed by a soundtrack album full of massive '80s rock hits. The popularity of the soundtrack was nearly solely responsible for the film's cult status, since music licensing issues kept it from home video for over a decade, only allowing it to be seen occasionally on TV, or as a midnight movie in theatres.

Rediscover some of the most beloved cult films of all time. The Hollywood Suite Free Preview is on now until Jan. 5. Enjoy the best movies of the '70s, '80s, '90s and 2000s uncut and commercial-free on four HDTV channels and On Demand, available on most TV providers.

See all these films on Hollywood Suite this month. Catch a cult film triple bill of And Now For Something Completely Different, Attack of the Killer Tomatoes and The Rocky Horror Picture Show, Dec. 17 on the Hollywood Suite '70s Movies channel and ring in the new year with Heavy Metal on the Hollywood Suite '80s Movies channel Dec. 31. Learn more at hollywoodsuite.ca/freepreview.

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In Rogue One: A Star Wars Story, British-Pakistani actor Riz Ahmed plays Bodhi Rook, a former Imperial pilot who takes his technical skills across to the Rebel Alliance. CONTRIBUTED

Galaxy's recruit a loveable rogue

INTERVIEW

Riz Ahmed admits he was a troublemaker on Star Wars set

Richard Crouse
For Metro Canada

Like a lot of kids Riz Ahmed liked Star Wars. Unlike most kids he grew up to be part of the franchise, playing pilot Bodhi Rook in Rogue One: A Star Wars Story.

"I was a fan," says Ahmed, also known as Riz MC, who earlier this year starred in HBO's The Night Of. "I remember watching the films the first time round with my older brother. I was about six or seven years old. They were kind of my only memory of watching any movie at all. They left a massive impact on me. I remember running around with my brother for years, acting out our own weird sci-fi stories. Even though I didn't understand the storyline – I was too young – the level of imagination and detail that went into those movies.... It made an impression."

Yet, while the originals left an impression on the younger Ahmed, it was only when he joined the universe himself that he realized his level of fandom might not have been quite at the level he had thought.

"It's only now that I have met real Star Wars fans that I realize I wasn't really a fan," he says. "I thought I was. Star Wars fans are dedicated, loyal fans. I think the kind of vibe I've gotten so far is that they are really excited to see a film that both preserves the legacy and the inheritance of the Star Wars saga but is also something a little different, fresh, distinctive and separate from the other films. I think that can be a really tricky balance to achieve but I think they have really done that. "

> **It's only now that I have met real Star Wars fans that I realize I wasn't really a fan. I though I was.**
> Riz Ahmed

Rogue One is the first standalone Star Wars Anthology film — upcoming movies in the expanded cinematic universe will focus on Han Solo and Boba Fett — and takes place after the formation of the Galactic Empire, shortly before the events of Episode IV: A New Hope.

The Rebel Alliance has recruited former criminal Jyn Erso (Felicity Jones) to collaborate with a team to retrieve the blueprints of the Death Star, the Empire's armoured battle station capable of destroying entire planets.

Ahmed plays a recruit, a former Imperial pilot with strong technical skills. Producer Kathleen Kennedy calls the character "a troublemaker."

"It is interesting she calls Bodhi Rook a troublemaker," Ahmed laughs. "I sometimes wonder if she is talking about me on the film set. Bodhi is somebody who is thrust into a really unfamiliar set of circumstances. He is just an Imperial cargo pilot, an average Joe trying to earn a living. It is a company town he lives in, the occupied planet of Jedha, so he works for the Empire. He's really thrust into a new set of circumstances that force him to reconsider his allegiances and what he's doing in these turbulent times."

Working beside Ahmed are Diego Luna, Donnie Yen and Forest Whitaker, making Rogue One the most diverse of all the Star Wars films.

"I think it just makes sense that our film reflects the society around us," says the British Pakistani actor, "and also the audience watching the films. A story like Star Wars is a global story. It belongs to all of us.

"Audiences around the world are excited about Star Wars so it makes sense that when they think about who might be the best actors for these roles they cast their net really wide all around the world. 'Yeah, we'll have Ben Mendelsohn from Australia, Forest Whittaker from L.A. and Mads Mikkelsen from over here.' I'm lucky to have been caught up in this net as well."

Can Moonlight spark a black gay renaissance?

ANALYSIS

Coming-of-age story explores issue rarely seen in mainstream

Neil Armstrong
For Torstar News Service

Actor Ashton Sanders plays one of three stages of Chiron, the focus of Moonlight, Barry Jenkins' lauded coming-of-age story. CONTRIBUTED

The acclaimed drama Moonlight has become a leading awards contender this season, giving hope for diversity in the year after #OscarsSoWhite.

But the story it tells, of a young black man slowly coming to terms with his homosexuality, is one rarely seen in mainstream culture — until recently that is. On film, on television and onstage, there seems to be a sudden convergence of art forms telling the stories of black queer people, especially males.

Moonlight joins the similarly themed 2015 indie film Blackbird, plus the hip-hop drama Empire on Fox, which introduced a gay love interest for Jussie Smollett's character Jamal earlier this year, and the complicated, diverse LGBTQ characters of Orange Is the New Black.

Onstage in Toronto, black queer characters were front and centre in productions this year including Secrets of a Black Boy, How Black Mothers Say I Love You and, notably, in Black Boys, a "timely exploration of queer male blackness" that just ended a run at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre.

Are these productions part of a "black queer renaissance" as some have called it?

In an interview with the Los Angeles Times before Moonlight had its first public screening at the Telluride Film Festival, director Barry Jenkins said, "This movie was made for anybody who has ever felt other or like they can't be themselves and be accepted in society."

Compared to now, in the '90s such content was almost nonexistent.

There were exceptions, such as Jeffrey Wright's portrayal of the title artist in the 1996 movie Basquiat, and Queen Latifah's portrayal of a very proud lesbian in Set It Off.

And then there was Will Smith's intriguing yet problematic lead in the 1993 movie Six Degrees of Separation (played onstage by Courtney B. Vance).

At the time there was some controversy over Smith's portrayal of a gay character — a lying, promiscuous one at that — and what it might mean for his career. If anything, it helped.

Fast forward to now and Les Fabian Brathwaite of Out Magazine writes: "For the first time since perhaps the Harlem Renaissance, the souls of queer black folk have been depicted on our own terms as we take control of our narratives. . . This is the new renaissance."

Thomas Olajide, one of the stars of Black Boys, thinks it's a matter of serendipity to have a play he and his co-creators had been working on for four years come out at the same time that Moonlight is picking up award season buzz, including six Golden Globe nominations this week.

"It just seems like it's the climate for these stories to be unearthing very naturally," he says. "Perhaps we're all reaching a level of fatigue with not hearing those stories."

His co-star, Stephen Jackman-Torkoff, says "it's not just males but a lot of female queer people of colour (who) are really driving" the surge of such stories, at least on Toronto stages.

"Our communities have always existed," says playwright d'bi young anitafrika (She Mami Wata & The Pussy WitchHunt). "Whose visibility validates this idea of a renaissance?"

Having worked in the arts for 20 years, she notes, "What I can say is I do see a change in the visibility of black queerness in more dominant public spaces."

But Kimahli Powell, who directed Secrets of a Black Boy and sits on the board of the Inside Out LGBT Film Festival, says we shouldn't expect this supposed renaissance to continue.

"No doubt that Moonlight is a seminal work and its breakthrough is important," he says. "Yet when these moments happen — and they have in the past — we hope Hollywood has embraced storytelling and yet things remain the same.

"#OscarsSoWhite was just last year."

In terms of queer cinema, Powell notes people thought Brokeback Mountain would open doors for more movies representing LGBT people. That was a decade ago and little has changed.

"We definitely should celebrate that these stories happen to be shared at this moment but, unless there is a deeper shift in decision-making, we shouldn't expect more black queer art anytime soon."

> **This movie was made for anybody who has ever felt other or like they can't be themselves and be accepted in society.**
> Barry Jenkins, Moonlight director

SLUGLINE

The making of a serial killer

FILM

The Eyes of my Mother is about an evil woman with good intent

Chris Alexander
For Metro Canada

Ever since Roman Polanski trapped Catherine Deneuve in a Paris apartment and watched her lose her mind in 1965's Repulsion, horror cinema has had an enduring infatuation with the psychotic woman.

There's something unsettling about this dynamic, taking our hard-wired societal perceptions of femininity and twisting them, making them unstable and often evil.

Director Nicolas Pesce's alarming black and white psychodrama The Eyes of my Mother is another in this unending line of crazy-lady shockers, and it's also one of the best films of 2016.

Charting the damaged upbringing of an upstate New York farm girl named Francisca and her even more broken and lethal adult life, the film stars newcomer Kika Magalhaes in a bravura yet muted performance.

Actress Kika Magalhaes says she went a little bit crazy preparing for the role. HANDOUT

Magalhaes is even more impressive because no matter Francisca's transgressions, she manages to make the character sympathetic and someone we — against our better judgement — deeply care about.

"I never saw her as serial killer," Magalhaes told Metro on the cusp of the film's limited release this Friday.

"I saw her as loving. All the horrific acts she commits come from a deep need for affection. She doesn't know how to express love because she was never shown this. She can't bear to see people leave her and I think that she thinks that she's always doing the right thing. It's not as simple as just good and evil."

The Eyes of my Mother does see Francisca committing murder and worse in order to sate her illness, but the film is not exploitation, nor does it revel in a high body count and gratuitous bloodshed. Still, no child should be let near the movie as it's about as dark and depressing as the genre gets. Credit Pesce and Magalhaes' close collaboration during pre-production on ensuring that Francisca is a fully fleshed out female, not just some nickel and dime boogeyman.

"Originally, it was all killing, killing and more killing. Then, we had a religious allegory driving it and then it just became her story. Nicolas made sure I watched all the key Hitchcock films, Under the Skin, the Lars von Trier movies and then I researched serial killers like Ted Bundy and maniacs like Charles Manson. To be honest, I felt like I was going a bit crazy myself during the process!"

The actress is genuinely concerned that she has been spoiled by such a wonderful first cinematic dance partner.

MOVIE LISTINGS

DOWNTOWN

Carlton Cinema Theatre
20 Carlton St., 416-494-9371
Anonymous Fri-Sun 7 **Arrival** Fri-Thu 1:25-4:05-6:40-9:15 **Assassin's Creed** Wed-Thu 1:05-3:45-6:35-9:05 **Collateral Beauty** Fri-Sun 1:10-1:35-3:45-4-6:30-9-9:15 Mon-Tue 1:10-1:35-3:45-4-6:30-7-9-9:15 Wed-Thu 1:35-4-6:30-9 **The Eyes of My Mother** Fri-Thu 4:10-9 **Harry Benson: Shoot First** Fri-Wed 1:40-6:50 Thu 1:40 **Miss Sloane** Fri-Tue 1:05-3:55-6:45-9:35 **Moana** Fri-Tue 1:20-3:55-6:30-9:05 **Office Christmas Party** Fri-Thu 1:30-3:50-6:55-9:20 **Passengers** Wed-Thu 1:10-3:55-6:35-9:10 **Rogue One** Fri-Thu 1-1:15-3:50-4:05-6:45-7-9:30-9:45 **Sing** Wed-Thu 1:20-4-6:40-9:25 **Turkish Star Wars** Sat 11-11:30

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Assassin's Creed Wed-Thu 10:45-1:30-4:15-7-9:45; 3D Wed 11:45-2:30-5:15-8-10:45 Thu 12:20-3:05-5:50-8:35-11:20 **Collateral Beauty** Fri 12:40-3:15-5:50-8:20-10:50 Sat 10-12:40-3:15-5:50-8:20-10:50 Sun 10-12:50-3:15-5:50-8:20-10:50 Mon-Wed 10:25-12:45-3:15-5:50-8:20-10:50 Thu 10:20-12:45-3:15-5:50-8:20-10:50 **Doctor Strange** Fri-Thu 5:20; 3D Fri-Thu 11:40-2:30-8:15-11 **Fantastic Beasts** Fri 1:10-4:20-7:30-10:40 Sat 12:30-3:40-6:50-10 Sun 12-3:10-40 Mon-Tue 12:30-3:40-6:50-10 Wed-Thu 10:10-1:10-4:20-7:30-10:40; 3D Fri 12:30-3:40-6:50-10 Sat-Tue 10:10-1:10-4:20-7:30-10:40 **Nocturnal Animals** Fri-Thu 11:50-2:50-5:40-8:25-11:15 **Office Christmas Party** Fri-Thu 12-12:30-2:30-3:15-5:10-6-7:50-8:40-10:30-11:15 **Rogue One** Fri 11:30-12:05-3:15-6-6:30-9:45 Sat-Mon 11:40-12:10-3:20-6-6:30-9:40 Tue 11:30-12-3:10-6-6:30-9:45 Wed-Thu 11:40-12:10-3:20-6-6:30-9:40; IMAX Fri-Thu 10-1:10-4:20-7:30-10:40; 3D Fri 12:45-2:45-3:50-5:15-7-8:40-9:15-10:15 Sat-Mon 11-12:40-2:10-2:50-3:50-5:20-7-8:40-9:10-10:10 Tue 10:55-12:30-2:05-2:40-3:40-5:20-7-8:45-9:15-10:15 Wed-Thu 11-12:40-2:10-2:50-3:50-5:20-7-8:40-9:10-10:10 Fri-Thu 10:30-1:40-4:50-8-11:10 **Sadie's Last Days on Earth** Fri 12:20-2:45-5:15-7:40-10:15 Sat 12:45-3-5:15-7:40-10:15 Sun-Tue 12:20-2:45-5:15-7:40-10:15

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Varsity
55 Bloor St. W., 416-961-6304
Allied Fri 1:20-4:25-7:15-10:10 Sat-Sun 1:20-4:25-7:15-10:20 Mon-Wed 1:20-4:25-7:15-10:10 Thu 1:20-4:25-10:10 **Fantastic Beasts** Fri-Thu 3:40; 3D Fri-Thu 12:35-6:50-10:05 Fri 1:30-4:30-7:30-10:30 Sat-Sun 1:20-4:20-7:30-10:30 Mon 1:30-4:30-7:30-10:20 Tue 4:30-7:30-10:30 Wed-Thu 1:30-4:30-7:30-10:20 **Jackie** Fri 1:50-4:55-7:40-10:30 Sat-Sun 11:30-1:50-4:55-7:40-10:30 Mon 12:45-3:20-6:40-9:20 Tue 1:50-4:55-7:40-10:30 Wed-Thu 12:45-3:20-6:40-9:20 Fri 1-4-7-10 Sat-Sun 12:50-3:50-7-10 Mon-Thu 1-4-7-10 **Lion** Fri 1:10-4:10-7:10-10:15 Sat-Sun 10:30-1:10-4:10-7:10-10:15 Mon-Wed 1:10-4:10-7:10-10:15 Thu 12:40-3:35-7:10-10:15 Fri 12:15-3-6-9 Sat-Sun 11:50-2:50-6-9 Mon-Thu 12:15-3-6-9 **Manchester by the Sea** Fri 12:10-12:50-3:20-4-6:40-7:20-10-10:30 Sat-Sun 10:30-12-12:40-3:20-4-6:40-7:20-10-10:30 Mon 12:10-12:50-3:10-3:50-6:10-6:50-9:10-9:50 Tue 12:10-12:50-3:20-4-6:40-7:20-10-10:30 Wed-Thu 12:10-12:50-3:10-3:50-6:10-6:50-9:10-9:50 Fri 12:30-3:30-6:30-9:30 Sat-Sun 12:20-3:20-6:30-9:30 Mon 12:30-3:30-6:30-9:30 Tue 1:30-3:30-6:30-9:30 Wed-Thu 12:30-3:30-6:30-9:30 **Moonlight** Fri 1:05-3:55-6:45-9:40 Sat-Sun 10:30-1:05-3:55-6:45-9:40 Mon-Thu 1:05-3:55-6:45-9:40 **Nocturnal Animals** Fri 1:20-4:20-7:25-10:25 Sat-Sun 10:35-1:20-4:20-7:25-10:25 Mon 1:20-4:20-7:25-10:10 Tue 1:20-4:20-7:25-10:25 Wed-Thu 1:20-4:20-7:25-10:10

Yonge & Dundas 24
10 Dundas St. 416-977-2642
Allied Fri-Thu 12:40-4:10-7:40-10:45 **Almost Christmas** Fri-Tue 12:10-6:10 **Arrival** Fri-Sun 10-1-4-7:30-10:30 Mon-Thu 1-4-7:30-10:30 Fri 5-8-11 Sat-Tue 2-5-8-11 **The Autopsy of Jane Doe** Wed 7 Thu 9:45 **Befikre** Fri-Thu 12:20-3:30-6:50-10 **Bolshoi Ballet: The Nutcracker** Wed 12:55 **Dangal** Wed-Thu 11:35-3-6:30-10:15 **Dear Zindagi** Fri-Tue 12:20-3:50-7:10-10:30 **The Edge of Seventeen** Fri-Sun 11:30-2:20-5-7:50-10:40 Mon-Tue 2:20-5-7:50-10:40 **Elle** Fri-Tue 1:50-4:50-7:50-10:50 **Fantastic Beasts** Fri-Tue 3 Wed-Thu 2:45; 3D Fri-Tue 11:40-2:50-6-9:20 Wed-Thu 11:45-6-9 Fri-Sun 11:45-6:20-9:30 Mon-Tue 12-6:20-9:30 **George Takei's Allegiance** Sat 3:30 Tue 6:30 **The Girl on the Train** Fri-Tue 3:10-9:10 **Home Alone** Fri 7 Sat 12:30 Sun 7 Tue 4:20 Thu 4 **Inferno** Fri-Sun 9 Mon 9:50 Tue 10:30 **It's a Wonderful Life** Mon 4-7 Tue 1:30-9:15 Wed 4 Thu 7 **Jackie** Wed-Thu 11:30-2:20-5-7:50-10:40 **Lion** Wed-Thu 1:20-4:25-7:40-10:45 **London Road** Fri 12:50 Sat 9:45 Mon 1 **Manchester by the Sea** Fri-Sun 8:45-12:10-3:50-7:20-10:40 Mon 12:10-3:50-7:20-10:40 Tue 12:10-3:50-7:10-10:40 Wed-Thu 12:10-3:50-7:20-10:40 **Miss Sloane** Fri-Tue 1:20-4:25-7:40-10:45 Wed-Thu 12:10-3:10-6:10-9:10 **Moana** Fri 12-2:40-5:20-8-10:30 Sat-Sun 2:40-5:20-8-10:30 Mon-Wed 12-2:40-5:20-8-10:30 Thu 12-2:40-5:20; 3D Fri-Sun 10:30-1:20-4:20-7:10-10 Mon-Thu 1:20-4:20-7:10-10 **National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation** Fri 4-9:30 Sat 7 Sun 9:30 Mon 9:45 Wed 9:30 Thu 1:30 **National Theatre Live: No Man's Land** Sun 11-3 **Office Christmas Party** Fri-Tue 1:30-4:30-7:30-10:05 Wed-Thu 12:15-3:15-6:30-9:30 **Passengers** Wed-Thu 1:50-4:50-7:50-10:50; 3D Wed-Thu 12:50-4-7:10-10:30 Wed-Thu 1:15-4:15-7:30-11 **Rogue One** Fri-Sun 12:15-11:15-2:30-5:45-9 Mon-Thu 1-4:30-8-11:30; IMAX Fri-Sat 1:20-5:20-9:20-12:30-3:40-6:50-10 Sun 9:20-12:30-3:40-6:50-10 Mon-Thu 9:50-1-4:10-7:20-10:30; 3D Fri-Sat 12:45-8:30 Sun 8:30 Mon-Thu 10:10-1:20-4:30-7:40-10:50 Fri-Thu 12-3:30-7-10:30 Fri-Sat 2-6:20-10-1:10-4:20-7:30-10:40 Sun 6:20-10-1:10-4:20-7:30-10:40 **Sing** Wed-Thu 10-12:45-3:40-6:20-9:10; 3D Wed-Thu 10:25-1:15-4:15-7-9:40 **Sword Master** Fri-Tue 1:10-4:05-6:40-9:30 **Trolls** Fri-Sun 10:55-4 Mon-Tue 4; 3D Fri-Sun 1:30-6:30 Mon-Tue 1:30 **The Wasted Times** Fri-Sun 9-11:50-3:15-6:30-9:50 Mon 11:50-3:15-6:30-10:45 Tue-Thu 11:50-3:15-6:30-9:50 **Why Him?** Thu 8-11

MIDTOWN

Yonge-Eglinton Centre
2300 Yonge St., 416-544-1236
Allied Fri-Sat 10:10-1-4:10-7:10-10:20 Sun 4:10-7:10-10:20 Mon 1:10-4:20-10:35 Tue 1:10-4:20-7:30-10:35 **Arrival** Fri 1:30-4:30-7:20-10:30 Sat-Sun 10:20-1:30-4:30-7:20-10:30 Mon-Tue 12-2:45-5:30-8:20-11 **Assassin's Creed** Wed-Thu 1:50-8; 3D Wed-Thu 4:35-10:40 **Bolshoi Ballet: The Nutcracker** Wed 12:55 **Collateral Beauty** Fri-Sun 11:40-2:20-5:20-8:10-10:45 Mon-Tue 12:10-2:40-5:20-8-10:40 Wed-Thu 12:05-2:35-5:15-7:50-10:30 **Fantastic Beasts** Fri-Sat 10:05-1:25-4:35 Sun 1:25-4:35 Mon-Tue 12:40-3:55; 3D Fri-Sun 7:40-11 Mon-Tue 7:20-10:30 **Moana** Fri-Sun 4:05 Mon-Tue 3:50 Wed 12-4:20-7:20-10:10 Thu 1:10-4:20-7:20-10:10; 3D Fri 10:35-1:20-6:55-9:45 Sat 1:20-6:55-9:45 Sun 10:35-1:20-6:55-9:45 Mon-Tue 1-6:50-9:40 **National Theatre Live: No Man's Land** Sun 11 **Office Christmas Party** Fri-Sat 11:20-2:10-5-7:50-10:50 Sun 2:10-5-7:50-10:50 Mon 12:30-3-7:30-11 Tue 12:30-3-5:35-8:10-11 Wed 3-5:35-8:10-11 Thu 12:30-3-5:35-8:10-11 Fri-Sun 2-5-8:30-11:30 Mon-Thu 2-4:50-7:30-11 **Passengers** Wed-Thu 5-11; 3D Wed-Thu 1:30-7:30 **Rogue One** Fri-Sun 12:40-3:50-7 Mon-Thu 12:20-3:30-6:40 Fri-Sun 12:15-11:15-2:30-5:45-9 Mon-Thu 1-4:30-8-11:30; 3D Fri-Sun 10-1:10-4:20-7:30-10:10-10:40 Mon-Thu 12:50-4-7:10-9:50-10:20 Fri-Sun 10:30-1:40-4:50-8-11:10 Mon-Thu 1:20-4:30-7:40-10:50 Fri-Sun 12-3:30-7-10:30 Mon 3:30-10:30 Tue-Thu 3:30-7-10:30 **Sing** Wed-Thu 5:25; 3D Wed-Thu 12-2:40-8:10-10:50

NORTH YORK

Empress Walk
5095 Yonge St., 416-223-9550
Arrival Fri 1:55-4:50-7:55-10:50 Sat 11-1:55-4:50-7:55-10:50 Sun 7:55-10:50 Mon 3:30 Tue 4:40-7:30-10:20 **Assassin's Creed** Wed 1:10-7 Thu 7; 3D Wed-Thu 4:40-10:25 **Bolshoi Ballet: The Nutcracker** Wed 12:55 **Collateral Beauty** Fri 1:05-3:50-6:35-9:25 Sat 10:35-1:05-3:50-6:35-9:25 Sun 10:20-11:10-3:55-6:35-9:25 Mon 3:50-6:40-9:20 Tue 4-6:30-9:20 Wed 12:50-3:20-6:30-9:20 Thu 3:30-6:30-9:20 **Fantastic Beasts** Fri-Sat 4:25 Sun 4:15 Mon 4:20-7:25-10:25 Tue 4:20 Wed-Thu 3:30; 3D Fri-Sun 10:15-1:15-7:30-10:35 Tue 7:25-10:25 Wed 12:30-6:40-9:40 Thu 6:40-9:40 **Manchester by the Sea** Fri-Sat 12-3:20-7-10:10 Sun 1:05-3:10-7-10:10 Mon-Tue 3:50-7-10:10 Wed 12:40-3:50-7:10-10:20 Thu 3:50-7:10-10:20 **Miss Sloane** Fri-Sat 11:50-3:10-6:30-9:35 Sun 3:25-6:30-9:35 Mon 3:30 Tue 3:30-6:40-9:45 **Moana** Fri-Sat 4:15 Sun 4:25 Mon-Tue 4:30 Wed-Thu 4:20-7:30-10:10; 3D Fri-Sat 10:45-1:35-7:05-9:50 Sun 12:45-7:05-9:50 Mon-Tue 7:10-9:55 **National Theatre Live: No Man's Land** Sun 11 **Nocturnal Animals** Fri-Sat 10:50-1:45-5-8:05-10:55 Sun 1:45-5-8:05-10:55 Mon-Tue 4:50-7:40-10:30 **Passengers** Wed-Thu 4-9:50; 3D Wed 1:40-7:40 Thu 7:40 **Rogue One** Fri-Sun 12:25-3:35-6:45-9:55 Mon-Tue 6:20-9:30 Wed 3:10-6:20-9:30 Thu 6:20-9:30; IMAX Fri-Sun 10:15-1:25-4:35-7:45-10:55 Mon-Tue 4:10-7:20-10:30 Wed 1-4:10-7:20-10:30 Thu 4:10-7:20-10:30; 3D Fri-Sun 12:55-4:05-7:15-10:25 Mon-Tue 3:40-6:50-10 Wed 12:30-3:40-6:50-10 Thu 3:40-6:50-10 **Sing** Wed-Thu 4:30; 3D Wed 1:30-7:50-10:30 Thu 7:50-10:30

SilverCity Yorkdale 6
3401 Dufferin St., 416-444-3456
Allied Fri-Sun 4-7:10-10:10 Mon-Tue 4:10-10:10 **Arrival** Fri-Sun 1-4:30-7:20-10:10 Mon-Tue 1:30-4:20-7:30-10:30 **Assassin's Creed** Wed-Thu 4:10; 3D Wed-Thu 1:10-7:20-10:10 **Collateral Beauty** Fri-Sun 12:15-2:50-5:20-7:50-10:20 Mon-Tue 1:40-4:20-10 Wed-Thu 1:40-4:40-7:20-10 Mon-Tue 7:10 **Doctor Strange** Fri-Sun 3:30 Mon-Tue 3:20; 3D Fri-Sat 12:30-6:40-9:40 Sun 12:30-9:40 Mon-Tue 12:30-6:30-9:20 Sun 6:40 **Fantastic Beasts** Fri-Sun 3:50 Mon-Tue 3:40 Wed-Thu 12:50-6:30; 3D Fri-Sun 12:45-6:50-10 Mon-Tue 12:40-6:50-10 Wed-Thu 3:20-9:40 **Moana** Fri 4:20 Sat-Sun 4:10 Mon-Tue 3:50 Wed-Thu 3:50-9:30; 3D Fri-Sat 10:45-1:30-7-9:50 Sun 10:50-1:30-7-9:50 Mon-Tue 1-6:45-9:30 Wed-Thu 12:30-6:50 **Office Christmas Party** Fri-Sun 12-2:30-5:10-7:40-10:30 Mon-Thu 1:50-4:50-7:50-10:40 **Passengers** Wed-Thu 4:20; 3D Wed-Thu 1:30-7:30-10:30 **Rogue One** Fri-Sun 10:15-1:25-4:35-7:45 Mon-Thu 12:20-3:30-6:40; 3D Fri-Sun 10:55 Mon-Thu 9:50 Fri-Sun 10:30-1:40-4:50-8-11:10 Mon-Thu 1:20-4:30-7:40-10:50 Fri-Sun 10-1:10-4:20-7:30-10:40 Mon-Thu 12:50-4-7:10-10:20 **Sing** Wed 9:40-3:40 Thu 3:40; 3D Wed-Thu 12:40-7-9:45 **Trolls** Fri-Sun 11-1:20 Mon-Tue 1:20

Silvercity Fairview 1800 Sheppard Ave., 416-644-7746
Arrival Fri-Sun 7:40-10:40 Mon-Tue 7:10-10:10 **Assassin's Creed** Wed-Thu 4:35; 3D Wed-Thu 1:45-7:30-10:30 **Collateral Beauty** Fri-Sun 10:15-12:40-3:05-5:45-8:30-11 Mon 2:25-5:05-7:40-10:20 Tue 12-2:25-5:05-7:40-10:20 Wed 2:25-5:05-7:40-10:20 Thu 1:35-4:25-7:45-10:20 **Doctor Strange** Fri-Sun 11:05-1:55-4:50-7:40-10:30 Mon 1:55-4:50-7:40-10:30 Tue 1:55-4:50-7:50-10:30 **Fantastic Beasts** Fri-Sun 4:35 Mon-Tue 4:05; 3D Fri-Sun 10:30-1:30-7:35-11 Mon-Tue 1-7:15-10:25 **It's a Wonderful Life** Thu 7 **Moana** Fri-Tue 4:15 Wed-Thu 1:30-4:15-7-9:50; 3D Fri-Sun 10:45-1:30-7-9:50 Mon-Tue 1:30-7-9:50 **Office Christmas Party** Fri-Sun 11:15-2-4:45-7:35-10:20 Mon-Wed 2-4:45-7:35-10:20 Thu 2-4:45-10:20 **Passengers** Wed-Thu 4:20; 3D Wed-Thu 1:30-7:30-10:30 **Rogue One** Fri-Sun 12:25-3:35-6:45 Mon 3:10-6:20 Tue 12-3:10-6:20 Wed-Thu 3:10-6:20; 3D Fri-Sun 12:55-4:05-7:15-9:55-10:25 Mon 3:40-6:50-9:30-10 Tue 12:30-3:40-6:50-9:30-10 Wed-Thu 3:40-6:50-9:30-10 Fri-Sun 10:15-1:25-4:35-7:45-10:55 Mon-Thu 1-4:10-7:20-10:30 **Sing** Wed-Thu 4:15; 3D Wed-Thu 1:15-7-10 **Trolls** Fri-Sun 12-2:30-5:05 Mon 2-4:35 Tue 2-4:30

Splurge or thrift for ideal gifts

Spend big or spend small, two shopping experts reveal their secrets to finding the perfect present for everyone on your list

Jacqueline Kovacs

A self-confessed holiday shopping splurger, Loukia Zigoumis, the Ottawa-based lifestyle blogger and shopping and travel expert on CTV Morning Live, starts her gift list in November. "I like to ask for ideas from the people I'm shopping for to narrow down my choices," said Zigoumis, "but I also love surprising my loved ones with unexpected gifts."

That often means gifts with big price tags. "There are definitely items I think you should splurge on," said Zigoumis, "sunglasses, handbags and electronics, as well as travel." But she adds that her splurge items are well thought out — key to not blowing the bank over the holidays. Here's how Zigoumis manages to be a big spender on a budget.

Lifestyle blogger Loukia Zigoumis. JON NICHOLLS

Style expert Karl Lohnes. AARON HARRIS

Shop early — really early

Don't think of the day after Christmas as Boxing Day. Think of it as the first day of holiday shopping for next year. As Zigoumis points out, you may groan now, but your wallet will thank you later. "After the holidays is a great time to shop for big-ticket items," she said, "whether it's designer goods or electronics as many items will be drastically reduced." Make a note of what you've bought in your personal calendar and then hide it in a spot that you won't forget, she adds.

Make it a long-term investment

Consider splashing out on one "main" gift and keeping any other peripheral gifts small, especially if you have older children. "My boys, now 11 and 8 years old, received iPads a couple of years ago as their main gift," said Zigoumis. "They were great investments as they use them for fun and when they travel. It makes sense to splurge on gifts for loved ones that you know they will love and will last a long time." For herself, Zigoumis says the one big-ticket gift she'd like would be a Louis Vuitton bag. "Designer handbags last forever and the price is easily justified because you know it's going to be used almost daily for years."

Take one for the team

Instead of individual gifts — and the associated shopping time — for each member of your family, consider a big group gift you'd all enjoy. "Perhaps you want to take your family on a tropical vacation during the winter," said Zigoumis. "Maybe everyone's gift can be the plane ticket in a beach bag, along with beach essentials." On the flip side, you could draw names and attach a big budget for the one gift you're getting for just one person.

The trappings of wealth

Even inexpensive gifts can put on pricey airs if the packaging is on the luxe side. "I am big on gift-wrapping presents nicely," said Zigoumis. "One of my favourite things to shop for is gift wrap, ribbons and bows." Those less than skilled at wrapping can take advantage of gift-wrap services within malls and department stores. No one even has to know.

If you want to buy brand-new, top-quality holiday gifts and decor, you'll need to take Karl Lohnes' approach — shop year-round. "In order to be a thrifty shopper of any sort, you have to be willing to shop out of season," said Lohnes, style expert with Toronto's CHUM FM radio.

Need a new artificial Christmas tree? Wait till mid-January. "You'll save at least 60 to 70 per cent of what you'd pay in November," said Lohnes. And the same applies to gifts. "Pick up a beautiful cashmere sweater for half price in February and put it away for next year for your loved one," he added.

Great advice, but what if like many of us, you've just realized that you haven't given a thought to holiday shopping? Fear not: Lohnes has thoughtful, creative gift ideas up his thrifty sleeve.

Go cheap or go home

Embrace your inner penny-pincher, encourage family or friends to do the same, and take on what Lohnes and his friends call "the cheapie challenge."

"You have to shop at a Value Village ... or a second-hand store," he explained, "and you have to find a gift for each person — but leave the price tag on to prove you paid so low." Then, go to town on the wrapping and await each big, cheap reveal.

"You open them up and go, 'An alabaster ashtray from the 1970s!' But actually, it's really cool and — oh my gosh, just $2.99!" At the end of the gathering, decide who was able to give a gift with the most style at the lowest price.

It's make or bake time

We all know people who are exception bakers, sewers and crafters — and what better way to give a thoughtful, affordable gift than to give something you've made?

"To bake somebody something can really mean so much to them — especially if they're not a baker," Lohnes said. "If they're not a knitter, make them a simple scarf. These days, we are all so busy, so it's a thoughtful thing to do."

A little experience goes a long way

Who says a gift has to be a physical object? Sometimes the most welcome present is providing someone your time and service. For example, Lohnes says, you could make a gift certificate offering to walk a loved one's dog for four Saturday mornings so they can sleep in. Or offer to help clean the house of an older parent or friend. Same with a promise to give a manicure or take them shopping — whatever service you know your loved one might need.

The point, says Lohnes, is to think differently about holiday presents."I think that gift-giving has become overwhelming for most people," he said. "There's so much choice and I think we need to put certain challenges into it — turn gifting into experiences. It doesn't mean that you're poor, but it's the idea that there's more thought put into it."

Best apps to save you money while shopping

There are many free downloads from your favourite app store — such as Google Play for Android devices or App Store for iPhone and iPad — that can each help take some weight off your wallet over the holidays. Here are a few favourites.

Flipp

Consider it the ultimate flyer and coupon app. Available for iOS and Android devices, Flipp lets you use your fingertip to flip through retailers that matter to you — whether it's a supermarket, big-box electronics store, clothing chain, home-decor outlet, and so on — and you'll be able to see the latest flyers that showcase new products and sales around you.

Ebates.ca

Saving money is great, but what if you could make money, too? That's the concept behind Ebates.ca, an app and website that pays you cash back every time you shop online through participating retailers — and there are many. Sign up for a free account, and then every time you shop at one of the supported stores or marketplaces — like Amazon.ca, The Gap, Hudson's Bay, eBay, Staples, Microsoft Store, Groupon, and Old Navy, to name a few — you'll start earning cash that can be sent to you via cheque, deposited into a PayPal account, or in the form of an Amazon.ca electronic gift card. The app also offers exclusive deals, as well as sales and coupons, too.

Kijiji

While you can often find a great deal at online marketplaces like Ebay, you'll have to wait for shipping — and the last thing you want is getting a gift into your loved one's hands in January. Instead, online classifieds sites like Kijiji — which is owned by Ebay — lets you buy, sell and trade locally with people, with cash, and you'd be surprised how many new items there are available to wrap as holiday presents. If you're meeting someone to buy a product, try to arrange to do so in a public place, during the day, just to err on the side of caution.

RedFlagDeals

Like its popular website, which caters to 2.5 million monthly readers (says the Yellow Pages-owned company), the RedFlagDeals app sniffs out the best bargains for Canadian shoppers. Featuring retail offers, coupons, flyers, featured items, news and tips, it's all curated by "deal hunters" and wrapped in a clean and easy-to-navigate interface.

MARC SALTZMAN

The Flipp flyer and coupon app. CONTRIBUTED

THIS SPECIAL REPORT WAS CREATED BY CONTENT SOLUTIONS, INDEPENDENT OF METRO EDITORIAL.

Learn a thing or two on teacher gifts

CLASS IN SESSION

Here are some bright ideas straight from the source

Astrid Van Den Broek

When it comes to giving teachers memorable gifts for the holidays, you know the cranberry-and-cinnamon-scented candle you gave your child's Grade 2 teacher probably didn't make her list of favourite gifts ever.

So what do teachers prefer to receive? Any hints on how to pick the perfect gift for your child's equally perfect teacher? Here are four to give us the scoop on their favourite presents.

PICTURE FRAME, MARSHALLS

Alyssa Greenberg
Grade 7/8 French Immersion teacher
École Stanley Knowles School, Winnipeg

"One of my students once presented me with a concert ticket for an artist we both really liked," said Greenberg. "The card included a message from her indicating that she had the other ticket and really wanted to enjoy the concert with me. Though it was a bit unconventional — I don't know many students who want to hang out with their teachers outside of school — this was really a memorable experience for me."

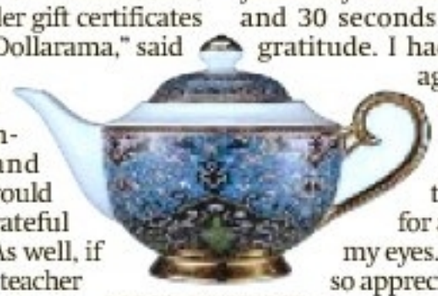
Gift giving cheat sheet: "It's always nice for students to notice teacher's interests and choose a gift card that would suit their needs," said Greenberg. For example, Greenberg's students have picked up the fact that she's a baker (she often bakes for her students at Christmas). "So I've often received baking supplies and small kitchen gadgets that have been put to good use."

CORKCICLE TUMBLER – COPPER, INDIGO.CA

Heather Webb Makin
Teacher/Librarian
Eastview Public School, Toronto

"As crazy as it sounds, one of the best and unexpected gifts was a cocktail blender. I was teaching Kindergarten at the time and there were just some days I could have used it during the school year," said Webb Makin. "I now use it for cocktails in the summer, as well as smoothies throughout the school year. I totally didn't know I needed one until I got it."

Gift giving cheat sheet: "Most teachers, as you know, buy a ton of supplies for their own classrooms, maybe consider gift certificates at Staples or Dollarama," said Webb Makin. "These would be used immediately and the teacher would be forever grateful for that gift. As well, if you know the teacher has a class iPad or Android device to use in the classroom, a gift card to buy an app would not only help the teacher, but most likely your child in the long run."



PORCELAIN TEAPOT, HOMESENSE

Jennifer Sepetdjian
Grade 2 teacher
On a teaching exchange at Glendal Primary School, Glen Waverley, Australia

"When I left my fabulous Grade 1 class in Canada back in December 2015, I got the best gift," said Sepetdjian.

BUFFALO PLAID SCARF, WINNERS

"The class parents and students put together a video of the kids answering questions about me and passing on some wise advice for my year away. It was eight minutes and 30 seconds of complete gratitude. I had to watch it again at home that night as I had missed so much of it that afternoon for all the tears in my eyes. I've never felt so appreciated in my 16 years of teaching."

Miranda Tonery
Grade 9 teacher
St. Francis of Assisi Middle School, Red Deer, Alta.

"The best gifts have been the ones that came from the heart. There was a parent who was very creative, and she made Christmas balls with the initials of every member of the family each on their own ornament," said Tonery.

"I also had student paint a silhouette picture of my family in a sunset on a canvas."

Gift giving cheat sheet: "I suggest parents get their child to choose what to purchase. Those kids know that Mrs. A loves coffee, that Ms. J loves to travel or that Mr. D loves to garden and they will be so excited to present the gift to their teacher," said Sepetdjian. "If not, something from a local restaurant, gift card to a shopping centre, tickets to the movies, books for the class, time at the "pick an item and paint it" kind of shop and there isn't anything wrong with the LCBO (liquor store)!"

GIFT IDEAS

1. Desk Set
HomeSense, $24.99
2. Buffalo Plaid Scarf
Winners, $24.99
3. L'Occitane Shea Butter Ultra Rich Body Lotion
Amazon.ca, $39
4. Metal Lunch Tins
HomeSense, $14.99 each
5. Tree Line Photo Pillow Cover
Indigo, Indigo.ca, $39.50
6. Corkcicle Tumbler – Copper
Indigo, Indigo.ca, $38
7. S'well Marble 17oz Insulated Water bottle
Indigo, Indigo.ca, $45
8. Picture Frame
Marshalls, $12.99
9. Superman 1,000 Piece Jigsaw Puzzle
Marshalls, $9.99
10. Porcelain Teapot
HomeSense, $19.99
*Prices may vary

Gift giving cheat sheet: "The best gifts have been the ones that came from the heart. However, large group gifts of a spa day is always nice as well."

It's time to spoil your furry friends

PAW-PULAR IDEAS

Pets know it's the holidays, so don't forget their presents

Ylva Van Buuren

Have a four-legged friend on your gift list this year? While the usual chew toys would be well received, why not use the holidays as an excuse to get something different, fun, and functional. Here's a 2016 gift guide for pets.

Wrap up the **Sniffany & Co Small Box Squeak Toy**. The plush turquoise and white dog toy has got its own bow and a squeaker for hours of stylish fun. *$24 at Shop Overstock Canada; shopoverstockcanada.ca.*

If your cat is a wanderer, use the **Nuzzle GPS Collar**. The pet tracking device uses GPS and includes a free Nuzzle app (no monthly or annual subscription fees either) that alerts you of location. The collar also provides access to emergency contacts and medical history records. The waterproof collar weighs just one ounce and is available in orange and purple. (Dogs can wear one too). *$189 at Hellonuzzle.com.*

Show you care with a glass **Magnet Set**. *$6.99 at HomeSense. Visit homesense.ca for store locator.*

Use the festive 10-foot **Retractable Leash** to take your best friend for a walk this holiday season. *$12.99 at Winners. Visit winners.ca for store locator.*

Fill the **Silhouette Treat Jar** with dog treats, and wrap it up for your best friend. *$19.97 at Walmart; walmart.ca.*

Amuse and exercise your cat with the **Smartykat Feather Whirl Electronic Toy.** The spinning feathers and unpredictable movements will keep Miss Kitty on her toes. $14.97 at *Walmart; walmart.ca.*

WOOF and MEOW Expression Frames are 4"x6" with matte black finish frames with silver-embossed words and an easel back. Wipe clean with a soft dry cloth. $19.50/ each at Indigo stores, Indigo.ca.

Personalize this 9" x 16" **Customizable Stocking** with a favourite picture, cherished quote and your dog's name! It's made from red and green plaid polyester, has a sturdy loop for hanging, and is machine-washable. *$40.25 at zazzle.ca.*

DanaZoo Crimson Bone **Stay-on Mat with Bowls** uses magnetic technology to help stop bowls from sloshing around while the dog eats and drinks — and making a mess. The 18" x 11" mat wipes clean, and bowls are dishwasher safe. *$24.99 at Sears.ca.*

Use the microfiber **Wet Pet Mat** to help keep floors clean when your pet comes in with wet or dirty paws. The 20" x 31" mat soaks up to seven times its weight in water and mud. A silicone undercoating eliminates skidding. The DanaZoo Wet Pet Mat costs *$21.99 at Sears.ca.*

The Umbra Fishhotel is an ultra modern fish bowl with glass inner bowl that is removable for cleaning with a white plastic outer shell. The 7½" x 7½" 'fish bowls' can be stacked to create a hotel effect. US*$40 from umbra.com.* Here's a great way to exercise — for you and your dog.

The **FitBark Wireless Dog Activity Monitor** tracks your dog's activity and health. The light weight monitor is eight grams and fits dogs of any size. It comes with rechargeable batteries, free apps and no monthly fees, in five different colours. *$129.95 at Indigo stores, Indigo.ca.*

Put a bow on this adorable **Bavarian Catnip Filled Owl.** The spelt filling provides a natural cushion, and guarantees lots of fun. No glue is used in the toy, just stitching. *$12.99 at Pet Value stores; petvalu.com.*

Product prices may vary.

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Gear up: New gaming hardware is here

NEW MACHINES

From next-generation consoles to virtual reality, amp up your entertainment

Marc Saltzman

Are you looking to get your game on in 2017? Get your thumbs ready. New versions of popular video game consoles are now available, not to mention cutting-edge virtual reality (VR) headsets to drop you "in" the game.

Expect these hardware platforms to be hot sellers over the holidays as more and more games are playable on them.

Here's a look at what's new and newsworthy.

PS4 Pro

Available for $499.99, the new and improved PlayStation 4 (PS4) console trumps its three-year-old predecessor. For one, it now supports 4K TVs — those new televisions with four times the resolution of 1080p HD — and offers HDR ("high dynamic range"), which reproduces a wider range of brightness levels, richer colours, and higher contrast levels. Even older games are now "up-scaled" to deliver more breath-takingly detailed graphics. And PS4 Pro also supports apps including Netflix and YouTube, both of which can display 4K video. This new black box also offers a faster processor for faster and smoother frame rates in your games, and the hard drive has doubled, from 500 gigabytes to 1 terabyte, so it can hold more content.

Xbox One S

Xbox has also undergone a significant makeover. Xbox One S — the "S" stands for "Slim" — is smallest and most compact Xbox yet, and also works well with new 4K TVs. In fact, along with supporting 4K games and streaming video services, Xbox One S can also play 4K Blu-ray discs, as well as regular Blu-rays and DVDs (PlayStation 4 Pro plays Blu-ray discs and DVDs, but not 4K discs). You also get 2 terabytes of storage for the price. With a starting price of $379 (500GB version), Xbox One S offers backward compatibility, therefore you can play a growing number of older Xbox 360 games at no additional cost.

HTC Vive

The most comprehensive solution for virtual reality buffs, HTC Vive ($1149.99) ships with a comfortable VR headset with twin high-resolution screens, and a built-in camera for when you need to see around you; two room-scale base stations that track your movement in a 3-D play space (no, you don't just sit down with HTC Vive); and two wireless controllers that let you interface with content. Speaking of content, the Valve VR store now has more than 700 PC downloads supported by HTC Vive, plus you get two games for free: a fantasy adventure called The Gallery: Call of the Starseed, and the fast and frantic, Zombie Training Simulator.

Oculus Rift

Purchased by Facebook for $2 billion dollars — yes, billion with a "b" — Oculus Rift ($849) also plugs into a compatible personal computer, like HTC Vive, and delivers an immersive 360-degree experience with VR games, movies, educational software, and more — including many exclusive titles you won't find anywhere else. Packed up with the headset is a Xbox One controller, but Oculus Touch is now available, for $279.99 for the pair, for a more engaging interactive entertainment experience. One of the dozens of launch titles for Oculus Rift, Farlands lets gamers explore an uncharted planet and discover new forms of life (including insects, fish and plants), while Lucky's Tale, included, is a fun platforming adventure.

PlayStation VR

Debuting in October, PlayStation VR ($549.99) works exclusively with the PlayStation 4 video game console for your TV. Set-up is a breeze, as you simply plug the gear into the PS4, mount the PlayStation Camera ($74.99) just below or above the television, and don the head mounted display (HMD) and earbuds, to be transported to virtual worlds. With a strong focus on gaming, PlayStation VR launched with a lineup of 30 games, including exclusive titles such as Batman: Arkham VR, PlayStation Worlds, Rez Infinite, DRIVECLUB VR and RIGS Mechanized Combat League.

Samsung Gear VR

Another player is the newly refreshed Samsung Gear VR ($139.99), which requires one of six compatible Samsung smartphones to experience virtual reality, by popping the phone inside the headset. Supported devices include Samsung Galaxy S6, S6 edge, S6 edge+, Galaxy Note5, Galaxy S7, and Galaxy S7 edge. After you insert your phone, you can run games and apps by touching a small trackpad and buttons on the right of the headset or via an optional Bluetooth controller, if you like.

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT: XBOX ONE S; SAMSUNG GEAR VR; HTC VIVE; PLAYSTATION VR; OCULUS RIFT; PS4 PRO

Get your game on with these picks

VIDEO GAMES

Here are some thumb-numbing suggestions

Marc Saltzman

Whether you're into sci-fi shooters, role-playing games, sports simulations or head-scratching puzzlers, 2016 served up a ton of selection and quality for the discerning gamer.

In fact, therein lies the problem: With so many games released each year — for consoles, computers and handheld devices — it can be tricky to know what to buy. If you need some suggestions, the following are some top games of the year, divided into kids, teens and adults, costing $69.99 apiece unless otherwise specified.

EA Sports' NHL 17. CONTRIBUTED

Kids

• Hit the ice with **EA Sports' NHL 17** (PlayStation 4, Xbox One), a fun and frantic hockey sim that delivers the goods. Along with playing as or against your favourite NHL team, this disc or download offers more accessible and responsive skating and shooting controls, smarter goaltending, new modes (Draft Champions and World Cup of Hockey), a deep progression system, new animations and stadium art, and better commentary to get you pumped up while you play. NHL 17 is also the most customizable game to date, and features dozens of thrilling new goal celebrations.

• As with its popular predecessors, **Skylanders Imaginators** once again fuses action figures with a video game: simply place the character on the Portal of Power, connected to a game console, and the character comes alive on the TV screen — but now there's a lot more customization. Along with an all-new story, kids can create their own Skylanders for the first time, by tweaking their in-game appearance, powers, abilities, catch phrases, and more. Available for all major platforms, the $89.99 Starter Pack includes a couple of characters, magical crystal, sticker sheet, Portal of Power, and the game.

Teens

• Who said all first-person shooters need to be super violent? Rated "Teen," Blizzard's colourful and cartoon-like **Overwatch** (PlayStation 4, Xbox One, Windows PC) pits two teams against one another in fast-paced, objective-based matches in the future. Featuring a roster of diverse characters — including soldiers, scientists, and adventurers — your team will unleash extraordinary powers, traverse the globe, and even speed up and slow down time. Use strategy, tactics and reflexes to survive the fight.

Naughty Dog's Uncharted. CONTRIBUTED

• If car racing is more your thing, Microsoft Studios' **Forza Horizon 3** is an open-world racing video game that supports cross-platform play between Xbox One and Windows 10 players. Based in Australia, the game is roughly twice as big as Forza Horizon 2, and includes locations such as Surfers Paradise, Yarra Valley, and the Outback. More than 350 cars are available — the most in a Forza game — and along with various solo and competitive multiplayer modes, Forza Horizon 3 also features a four-player co-operative ("co-op") multiplayer campaign.

• After selling more than 110 million Final Fantasy games since 1987, Square Enix is back with a new installment in the coveted role-playing game series: **Final Fantasy XV** (PlayStation 4, Xbox One) fuses a real-time battle system with memorable characters and a gripping story that tells of Crown Prince Noctis who bands with companions to push back against an invading army. Many years in development, this epic single-player game features an open-world environment and cinematic graphics.

Adults

• Available for Xbox One, PlayStation 4 and Windows PC, **Electronic Arts' Battlefield 1** challenges you to climb into the boots of a solider and battle over land, sea and air in a large-scale action game set against the backdrop of The Great War.

Up to 64 players can use WWI-era weapons and vehicles — including massive air ships, battleships, or an armoured train — and experience white-knuckle combat scenarios with dynamic elements to ensure no two battles will be the same.

• Exclusively available for PlayStation 4, **Naughty Dog's Uncharted 4: A Thief's End** once again stars treasure hunter Nathan Drake — and other returning characters — in a large-scale, third-person and action-heavy adventure. Along with tight and responsive controls, this game delivers near photorealistic graphics, convincing voice-acting, a great story, and many memorable moments.

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Be a wine aficionado this season

Peter Rockwell

With more wines in the world than needles on a Christmas tree, choosing the perfect bottle for those on your holiday gift list can be a challenge.

To simplify your shopping here are 10 tasty wines that will appeal to everyone from the burgeoning aficionado whose just getting into wine to the trendiest person you know.

For the wine newbie

Anciano 2007 '7 Year Old' Tempranillo (Spain): Relaxed and ready-to-drink, this Spaniard is one of the oldest reds on store shelves that's still in everyone's price range. Classically labeled and encased in an old-school gold wire wrap, it's all about mature berry fruit which makes it a perfect out of the box selection for turkey dinners.
LCBO retail: $12.95

Inception 2015 Irresistible White (South Africa): With a Garden of Eden-themed label this white looks sexy and tastes pretty much along the same lines. Big on stone fruit and upfront tropical flavours, it ends surprisingly dry, making it an all-around people pleaser.
LCBO retail: $13.95

Apothic 2014 Inferno (USA): This latest "limited release" in the ever growing Apothic family spends two months in charred, white oak whiskey barrels before being bottled. Though the booze is upfront and personal in the berry-rich aroma and flavour, it mellows itself out when the wine is chilled in the fridge for 10-15 minutes.
LCBO retail: $16.95

For the white wine fan

Kim Crawford 2016 Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc Holiday Edition (New Zealand): For wine fans, Sauvignon Blanc is as synonymous with New Zealand as sheep and the All Blacks. Kim Crawford's version from Marlborough is arguably the quintessential example, with its gooseberry fruit and zippy acidity wrapped in gold for the holidays.
LCBO retail: $19.95

Marques de Casa Concha 2014 Chardonnay (Chile): No longer the popularity powerhouse it once was, Chardonnay still holds a place in many hearts, and is proudly served up on holiday tables. This balanced mix of bright fruit and massaging oak has "match with turkey" written all over the label.
LCBO retail: $19.95

For the red wine fan

Meiomi 2014 Pinot Noir (USA): One for those who love a fruit bomb that revels in its not-so-subtle, thick berry flavours. The grapes come from three different regions in California, combining to create a flowing fruit trail that tastes as good on its own as it will with poultry and ham.
LCBO retail: $26.95

Fontanafredda 2011 Barolo DOCG (Italy): While Piedmont may lack Tuscany's sex appeal, its juice, especially what's squeezed from the vineyards around the village of Barolo, are considered wine royalty. Brooding and rustic with layers of Old World personality, Fontanafredda's Barolo is a great introduction to liquid aristocracy.
LCBO retail: $29.95

For the fizz fan

Santa Margherita Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG (Italy): Prosecco is so red hot it has made sparkling wine cool. Best known for its sublime Pinot Grigio, Santa Margherita's spin on this northern Italian sparkler is all about accessible drinkability highlighted by apple and peach aromas and a zesty citrus flavour trail.
LCBO retail: $18.95

Veuve Clicquot Brut Champagne (France): Orange in label and classic in champagne goodness, this Pinot Noir-based bubbly loves to get decked out for the season. This year, it's housed in an arrow tin indicating the distance to Champagne from 29 locations. Look for Montréal; it's the only Canadian city with a shout-out.
LCBO retail: $70.60

For the hipster

Gonzalez Byass Tio Pepe Extra Dry Fino Sherry (Spain): Everything old is new again and sherry, long the tipple of "mature" drinkers, is having a bit of a moment with both mixologists and millennial-aged wine aficionados. Bone dry and best served cold, this fino is surprising food-friendly and will stay fresh for over a week if refrigerated.
LCBO retail: $17.95

Prices reflect the range across the country. Some products may not be available in all locations.

Tasteful gifts for foodies

Vicky Sanderson

Sure it's better to give to than to receive. It's also true that splurging on a gift for your favourite home cook could be an investment in good eating. Here are a few items that might serve the amateur chef and gift-giver equally well.

Blenders don't always get the respect they deserve as small-footprint appliances that do everything from blend soups to make mayonnaise to chop nuts and herbs.

Chefs, who are also connoisseurs of mid-century or small-space design, might like one from Smeg, the Italian manufacturer of compact, curved countertop appliances in a rainbow of colours. A Smeg blender, in a cheery seasonal red, is available at Lowe's, lowes.ca, for $349.

Brand new this year is Panasonic's Countertop Induction Oven, which uses induction and infrared heating to create what has been described as a toaster oven on steroids. There's almost no preheat time; in minutes, it's up to 450°F. That's hot enough to grill whole fish quickly with a crisp skin and flaky, moist interior. A one-pan chicken and veg meal can be done in about 20 minutes.

The non-stick pan that must be used with it is dishwasher safe, and each unit comes with a cookbook of recipes developed by the Culinary Institute of America. Available at major retailers and on Panasonic's eStore, the manufacturer's suggested price is $700.

Le Creuset's Dutch Oven in Tartan. LE CREUSET

Home chefs who already love Le Creuset's line of enameled cast-iron wear might covet the Dutch Oven in a zippy Tartan pattern exclusive to Williams Sonoma, williams-sonoma.com, for $550. Purists who insist on solids will be better pleased with exclusive grey, white or dark blue options. (Psst: A more affordable idea is a simple cast iron pan, a favourite of many chefs. Walmart sells a Lodge 6.5-inch pan for $1.)

Fresh herbs take any dish from average to outstanding. They are much easier to incorporate if the kitchen includes a unit from AeroGarden, which makes economically-sized indoor garden kits with full-spectrum grow lights and hydroponic, soil-free containers. Recent sale prices at aerogarden.com began at about $100.

The slow cooker has long been loved by home cooks. It's perfect for anything that benefits from lengthy cooking at low temperature, such as stews, stocks and cheaper cuts of meat. It also does soups, yogurt, pudding, grain dishes, and jams.

There are lots of versions of this versatile cookware, but the granddaddy of them all, CrockPot, has a clever new design twist. The Multi CrockPot comes with a 2.5- split, a four-, and a six- quart crock. When not in use, they nest for compact storage. About $100 from Bed Bath & Beyond, bedbathandbeyond.ca.

A vacuum packer is a very efficient way to preserve food. So a chef can buy larger amounts of perishable foods, such as cheese, when it's on sale and/or available and use it reliably for a couple of months to come. It also seals make-ahead meals for road or camping trips, and busy weeknights.

Hamilton Beach has come out with NutriFresh, a vacuum sealer with settings for moist, dry and delicate foods, which are sealed in bags made of refillable, BPA-free plastic rolls. About $130 at multiple retailers and online at hamiltonbeach.ca.

Good knives are the foundation to a functioning kitchen. Knife nerds would be delighted to receive the Güde Chef's Knife from Lee Valley Tools, leevalley.com.

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metro TRAVEL

Your essential daily news

Pitbull releases details of his $1M U.S. deal with Visit Florida after House speaker sued for details

Boutique stays in Tel Aviv

For decades, the tourist landscape in Tel Aviv was dominated by mediocre beachfront hotels. Over the last several years, beautiful boutique properties have changed the city's hospitality scene and contributed to Tel Aviv's increasingly chic image. These accommodations are sleeker, smaller and often-affordable. **SARAH TRELEAVEN/FOR METRO**

MIDTOWN

Brown Beach House

This property is perfect for visitors looking for a hip and affordable small beachside hotel in an increasingly sophisticated part of the city. The giant neon pink flamingo out front and the sunny yellow furnishings set a playful tone. Some rooms have enormous ocean-facing balconies, and all have bright yellow or blue accents. The neighbourhood is ideal for exploring both the south of the city (hipper) and the north (more polished).

ALLENBY AND ROTHSCHILD

Hotel Montefiore

The original boutique beachhead is the Montefiore, which opened in 2008 and sits on a quiet side street. The Montefiore is all grace and discretion. The lobby restaurant — a fusion menu offering terrific pork and cabbage gyoza and wonderfully rich truffled goat cheese ravioli — is full of palm fronds and Art Deco light fixtures. The hotel's bedrooms are equally elegant, and in-room libraries offer a great selection of authors.

STEPS FROM ROTHSCHILD BOULEVARD

The Norman

The Norman is comprised of two 1920s buildings that still retain their original grandeur. The palette of creams and soft greys is complemented by Bauhaus and Art Deco touches. This 50-room hotel serves Mediterranean and Japanese cuisine, and showcases work by Israeli artists. Further cultural enrichment is provided through bespoke tours, including food tours of the Carmel Market and historic perspectives on Jaffa.

CENTRAL TEL AVIV

The Poli House

Canadian Karim Rashid is the designer responsible for The Poli House – the high-design (pod chairs, neon) new property that opened its doors in November. This stunning boutique hotel was carved out of a 1934 Bauhaus wonder in central Tel Aviv, and is the product of a three-year modernization process that remained loyal to the building's heritage. The focus of this 40-room property is a massive panoramic rooftop space with an infinity pool, cocktail bar and tapas menu. There's also a ground floor "cultural centre," complete with gallery space and design bookstore.

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Valentin Perla Blanca
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Beautiful scenery, cultural learnings

NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

National Park hosted by all-Inuit Parks Canada staff

Jenn Smith Nelson
For Torstar News Service

Elder, Sophie Keelan was born on Sallikuluk, aka Rose Island — an important archaeological site and final resting place for over 600 Inuit. In addition to it's stunning landscapes, the Torngat Mountains region offer opportunities to learn about Inuit culture, history and the environment. ALL PHOTOS JENN SMITH NELSON/FOR TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

No images of rolling green hillsides, sheer cliffs, magnificent fjords or massive icebergs were taken on this day. Instead, my ears did all the work. After four days of maritime adventures on Labrador's scenic but stark and rugged coast, alongside ancient rocks more than 3.8 billion years old, it was time to listen.

The Torngats had stories to tell.

The immense tree-barren beauty and remoteness of the Torngat Mountains National Park and its offerings are both an adventurer's dream and pure form of cultural tourism.

Inuit gifted the park to Canada after a successful land claim in 2005. Since becoming the country's 42nd national park, it's become a major draw, where visitors can spend time with elders who call the unspoiled landscape home.

Through song, storytelling and firsthand experience, visitors learn about Inuit culture, history and the environment.

"Spending time with Inuit elders reinforces the connection of people to the land and place," says Martin Lougheed, Parks Canada's visitor experience manager.

Nestled into St. John's Harbour in Saglek Bay is the base camp, gateway to the photogenic Torngats. Hosted by all-Inuit Parks Canada staff, it's also home to a mix of visitors, including elders, youth, researchers, base-camp staff, performers and guests. Camp integration and community togetherness happens quickly here, making it feel like an adult version of summer camp.

"Being in a remote location creates a sense of camaraderie among guests, adds Lougheed. "Friendships are forged that continue long after their time together."

Weather-dependent excursions include hiking and venturing out to sea to take in the panorama, look for wildlife, and explore nearby islands and ancient Inuit villages.

For how incredible and vast the region is, it's equally treacherous. From polar bears to raging seas, moody fog and weather, it's not to be underestimated. Thanks to today's non-stop rain, it's too risky to leave camp, so the Parks folks gather everyone in the visitors' centre to watch a video presentation on Hebron, a nearby island.

Settled by a protestant sect of German Moravians in 1830, Hebron had once been the northernmost settlement in all of Labrador, and home to a flourishing Inuit community that enjoyed a traditional life in the rich fishing village.

In 1959 however, politicians working in collusion with the Moravians gathered residents in the church and advised them they'd be relocated to southern locations, such as Nain, Hopedale and Makkovik, in order to be closer to services.

Residents had no choice but leave their homes. Families were torn apart and once resettled, left unsupported. Great hardship and tragedy followed, with repercussions still felt today. Through storytelling and acknowledgement, healing and reconciliation have begun.

A man from the video looks familiar. Glancing over my shoulder, John Jararuse, an elder, sits three rows back.

Sophie Keelan is another elder also staying at base camp. After the video, our paths collide and she tells me she'd like to share her story.

Keelan is Jararuse's cousin. At 11 years old, they were separated by leaving Hebron.

At 68 years old, this memory is painfully fresh. "It was a sad departure, the saddest time," Keelan says, recalling as her family left on the boat Trepassey.

"They promised us good housing and jobs, but when we got to Makkovik, there was no housing at all. We had to live in a tent."

Tears begin to well in her eyes and then mine. "We lost our identity. We lost our family."

Still emotional, it's the second last day and a boat ride to Hebron means we will visit Keelan and Jararuse's home.

My place, as it's been all week, is at the top of the boat's bow, eyes ahead watching for wildlife and taking in views. By now it's also become my spot for introspection, perspective and internal reset.

Being here does something to you.

Arriving at Hebron, it's easy to imagine the once-vibrant life that thrived along its scenic shoreline, now littered with abandoned buildings and a giant church in the distance.

We explore the beautiful island and then are summoned to the church. Jararuse is sitting at the front, where he addresses us in a soft-spoken voice. "This used to be our church. Everyone was welcome here."

Not long after, Jararuse is beside me on the boat. Watching him, his eyes are transfixed on the shoreline, as they once likely were 57 years ago.

It's my turn to say goodbye a day later and Parks Canada Supt. Gary Baikie's words repeat in my head, "We hope you go home with a memorable experience."

Beyond an adventurous trip that included amazing excursions, seeing polar bears and aurora borealis, the region and its people encouraged a truly meaningful journey.

THINGS TO DO IN THE TORNGAT MOUNTAINS

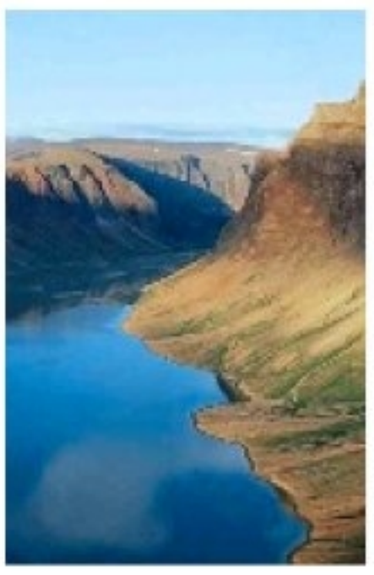
Visitors from around the world are drawn to the Torngat Mountains Base Camp and Research Station for the remoteness, adventure, and the opportunity to connect with nature, wildlife, and elders and youth from Nunatsiavut and Nunavik. Parks Canada staff plan daily itineraries and if the weather is favourable excursions to nearby islands are on the agenda. JENN NELSON SMITH/FOR TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

1 Iceberg and wildlife watching

Being out on boats nearly every day provides numerous opportunities to look for wildlife, such as polar bears, wolves, caribou, minke whales, seals and if you can believe it, even black bears (this is the only place in the world they exist north of the tree line).

2 Island excursions

Each morning, the lunchroom's whiteboard details the day's outings. Standout day trips include boating to glorious Silluak (North Arm) where the beauty of the Saglek Fjord astounds visitors. There, they can hike to a waterfall, pick fresh sub-Arctic berries, fish for abundant char and enjoy a beach fish fry complete with bannock made on the spot. Visits to other incredibly scenic spots like Sallikuluk (Rose Island) or Ramah are also usually included.



3 Take in the views

The fact is no matter where you are in this part of the country, striking views exist and hiking can be done most anywhere. Even at base camp, there are hikes to a nearby waterfall, a hilltop inukshuk and Torr Bay that provide the opportunity to get up a little higher and take in the view from above. Visitors can also rent an onsite helicopter (at additional cost) to fly up and around the magnificent region to take in the beauty of the Torngats peaks, valleys and waterways.

metro SPORTS

Christine Sinclair has been named Canada's women's soccer player of the year for the 13th time in 17 years

Messier blown away by Jagr's longevity

NHL

Czech player poised to become 2nd in all-time points

44

Jagr's age. He turns 45 on Feb. 15.

Panthers right-winger Jaromir Jagr had 1,883 NHL points over his career heading into action on Thursday night. STEVE RUSSELL/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Whether as a flashy rising star or as a battle-tested veteran, Jaromir Jagr has impressed NHL legend Mark Messier for more than a quarter century.

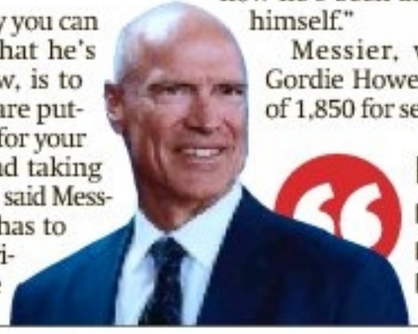
"When (Jagr) came into Pittsburgh he dazzled us with his power and his skill and his overall game," said Messier. "Later on in his career he's kind of inspired us with his passion and dedication.

"He's played long enough to understand what the game means to him as a person and as a player."

Poised to be overtaken by the 44-year-old Jagr for second on the NHL's all-time points list, Messier reflected Thursday about the Czech superstar's accomplishment in what has become increasingly a young man's game.

"The only way you can play, and do what he's doing right now, is to make sure you are putting in the time for your conditioning and taking care of yourself," said Messier. "The game has to be the No. 1 priority in your life because it takes a lot of time to prepare each and every game, let alone each and every season.

"You've got to give Jaromir a lot of credit for what he's been able to do early in his career, and then maybe even more credit for how he's been able to sustain himself."



Messier, who passed Gordie Howe's point total of 1,850 for second all-time in his final NHL season back in 2003-04, finished his career with 1,887 points. Jagr grabbed third place from Howe in March and sat at 1,883 points heading into Thursday's game between his Florida Panthers and the Winnipeg Jets.

Wayne Gretzky's all-time mark of 2,857 points isn't going to be equalled by Jagr, or likely anyone else for that matter.

> **In my own mind he surpassed me a long time ago.**
> Mark Messier on Jaromir Jagr approaching his NHL points total

Jagr joined the Pittsburgh Penguins in 1990 and won two Stanley Cups alongside Lemieux. He has gone onto play for seven more NHL franchises, but also spent three seasons in the KHL where he amassed 146 points.

Messier scored his 1,887 points in 1,756 NHL games, while Jagr has suited up 1,659 times in North America.

"This is kind of anticlimactic for me in a way," said Messier. "I understand the amount of time he put in overseas.

"In my own mind he surpassed me a long time ago."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

HOCKEY

Canadian juniors low on star power

Dylan Strome GETTY IMAGES

Without an obvious star player to carry the pressure and expectations, Canada's team for the world junior hockey championship will be all about teamwork, speed and desire.

The final 22-man roster that emerged from this week's four-day selection camp in Boisbriand, Que., is deep in very good players, such as 2015 third overall NHL draft pick Dylan Strome and Ontario Hockey League scoring leader Taylor Raddysh, but doesn't have a Connor McDavid or a John Tavares to claim the spotlight.

"We want to be a complete team," said coach Dominique Ducharme, the Drummondville Voltigeurs coach and general manager who led the Halifax Mooseheads to the 2013 Memorial Cup. "We've got speed, skill.

"We're reliable. We can defend. We're good at putting pressure on the other team. We want to put all that together."

The heat will be on Canada after a quarter-final elimination from last year's world junior event by host Finland.

And this year the stakes may be higher in Montreal and Toronto, where Canada won gold in two years ago. THE CANADIAN PRESS

SPONSORSHIP

Tiger signs deal to use new golf ball

One tournament into his return was all Tiger Woods needed to strike a deal with Bridgestone to play its golf ball.

Bridgestone Golf said Thursday it has signed Woods to a multi-year agreement in which he will play and promote the golf ball. Woods effectively became a free agent for equipment deals when Nike decided to stop making clubs and golf balls and instead focus on apparel.

Bridgestone becomes the first new equipment company that Woods has endorsed since he turned pro 20 years ago. He signed with Titleist (equipment) and Nike (footwear and clothing) in 1996, and his switch to all Nike equipment began with its golf ball in May 2000.

Terms of the contract were not disclosed.

Woods recently returned to the Hero World Challenge in the Bahamas after having not played for 15 months while recovering from back surgeries.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NBA

Beloved broadcaster Sager dies at 65

Craig Sager never once thought about giving up as he battled cancer for more than two years.

"Man, life is too beautiful, too wonderful, there's just too many things," he said in late August. "It's not just you. It's your family and kids and all. Fight. Fight until the end. Fight as hard as you can."

The end for the beloved TNT broadcaster came Thursday when the man known as much for his outrageous wardrobe as his relationships with the NBA's elite succumbed to the disease he fought so hard to overcome. He was 65.

"Craig Sager was a beloved member of the Turner family for more than three decades and he has been a true inspiration to all of us," Turner president David Levy said in a statement. "There will never be another Craig Sager. His incredible talent, tireless work ethic and commitment to his craft took him all over the world covering sports."

His son, Craig Jr., posted a loving video tribute to his father, tweeting: "We packed a lifetime and then some into these 28 years together."

Craig Sager GETTY IMAGES

Sager's passing brought out condolences from every corner of the NBA and Hall of Famer Larry Bird expressed what many were feeling.

"He was as identifiable with the NBA as any player or coach," Bird said in a statement. "The league will not be the same without him."

Magic Johnson echoed those sentiments on Twitter.

"The NBA family lost a legend who changed the way sideline reporters did their job. RIP Craig Sager," Johnson said.

Sager had a third bone marrow transplant at the end of August in Houston to fight an aggressive form of leukemia.

He announced in April 2014 that he had been diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia, and he missed the playoffs and much of the following season as he underwent two bone marrow transplants. He revealed in March 2016 that his leukemia was no longer in remission.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IN BRIEF

Major League Soccer plans to expand to 28 teams

Major League Soccer commissioner Don Garber announced plans Thursday for the league's expansion to 28 teams, including a deadline for owners to apply and a new franchise fee.

The fee for the two teams expected to be granted next year is jumping to $150 million. Garber also set a Jan. 31, 2017, deadline for interested potential owners or ownership groups to apply.

The league recently expanded to 22 teams.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Top Euro clubs unite against expanded World Cup

FIFA has found a difficult opponent to president Gianni Infantino's plan to expand the World Cup to 48 teams.

A group of 220 of Europe's top clubs called on Infantino on Thursday not to increase the tournament from its 32-team format.

The European Club Association said the number of games played each season "has already reached an unacceptable level."

Infantino wants 48 teams at the 2026 World Cup.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Finding value at running back

NFL

Unheralded players making impact with ground attack

Hark the unheralded running backs.

Fifth-round picks, an undrafted rookie and a player who was out of the NFL for three seasons are among those bursting into the clear this year, leaving defences and fans wondering the same thing: Where did they come from?

The surprising success by such low-profile rushers as Jay Ajayi, Jordan Howard, Robert Kelley and Tim Hightower speaks to the challenge of evaluating running backs.

"It's not like it used to be," said Miami Dolphins offensive coordinator Clyde Christensen, an NFL assistant since 1996. "When I first came in the league, you'd watch a tailback in college, and they all had a fullback in front of them, and they all got their 25 carries a game, and you compared them to each other. Now they're coming out of spread offences, and there are a lot of good running backs out there who play for teams that don't run the ball as much. It's a lot harder comparing them now."

Some of the most frantic scrambling this season has been by teams seeking someone to carry the ball, with the high injury rate at the position creating openings for under-the-radar runners.

> **"It seems like rushing is coming back a little bit.**
> Dolphins coach Adam Gase

Ezekiel Elliott, DeMarco Murray and Le'Veon Bell are having big seasons, as expected. But other Pro Bowl backs — Todd Gurley, Doug Martin, Adrian Peterson, Chris Ivory — have struggled or been hurt this year.

Four-time Pro Bowl rusher Arian Foster retired from Miami in October, the day after Ajayi's second consecutive 200-yard game for the Dolphins. Even coach Adam Gase was surprised by the way the job was seized by Ajayi, a fifth-round pick in 2015.

"When we were going into the season, we felt like we were going to get four guys involved in what we were doing," Gase said. "So we didn't know if we'd really have enough touches to say a guy was going to have a 1,000-yard season."

Ajayi is 44 yards from the 1,000 mark, and one of 11 players on pace to reach the milestone. Six did it last year.

Cowboys rookie Elliott leads the league with 1,392 yards.

"We've all seen how the league has gone as far as trends with the running backs," Gase said. "It seems like rushing is coming back a little bit. You're seeing teams like Dallas, and obviously we're feeling pretty good about what we've got going on. There are other teams that are leaning on the running back a little more now."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dolphins running back Jay Ajayi carries the ball against Bills cornerback Ronald Darby on Oct. 23 in Miami Gardens, Fla. Ajayi rushed for 214 yards in a 28-25 win. MIKE EHRMANN/GETTY IMAGES

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Faber unsure how to feel about his farewell

MMA

The California Kid, 37, won over fans with his style, charm

As he prepares for the final fight of his career, UFC bantamweight Urijah Faber is still wrestling with his emotions. On one hand, he's fully prepared to step away from the sport that has made him wealthy and a household name in the MMA world.

On the other, the 37-year-old Faber is unflinchingly confident that he can still get it done inside the octagon that has been his home away from home for more than two decades. "I know for sure when I walk out to the cage it's going to be a different type of feeling," Faber told The Associated Press this week. "I really believe that, because of everything that's going on, in my hometown, my last fight. It is going to be a little bittersweet because I know I can still compete at the highest level and I'm still all there."

Urijah Faber lost a unanimous decision to Jimmie Rivera at UFC 203 in September. REY DEL RIO/GETTY IMAGES

By all there, Faber means he is physically fine after 43 professional matches in the now-defunct World Extreme Cagefighting and UFC.

Along the way, Faber became highly popular with fans for his grit, charming smile, playful personality and a willingness to fight whoever was put in front of him.

That he never won a UFC title is merely a blip on Faber's otherwise stellar career.

"This is a very rough way to make a living," Faber said. "It goes without saying that there are trials and tribulations with being a professional fighter."

Faber has been through it all, from refusing to quit after breaking both of his hands early in one fight to his three classic bouts with current UFC bantamweight champ Dominick Cruz, including their title fight at UFC 199 in June.

It was Faber, the California Kid, who brought attention to the lower weight classes in MMA at a time when media and fans were focused almost solely on the middleweights and heavyweights.

Not much has changed over his 13-year career. Faber (33-10) is almost certain to receive a thunderous response from the crowd at GoldenOne Center when he walks to the cage to face Brad Pickett (26-12) on Saturday.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING

Russia would cancel World Cup races

Russia's top cross-country skiing official says she is prepared to cancel upcoming World Cup races in the country amid the Russian doping scandal.

Elena Valbe tells state agency R-Sport she would "absolutely" allow the March 16-19 final round of the World Cup in Tyumen to be moved outside Russia if it would generate goodwill to let Russia compete in the 2018 Winter Olympics.

Russia is under pressure after a report last week by World Anti-Doping Agency investigator Richard McLaren alleged a vast, state-sponsored doping coverup involving 12 medallists from the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.

On Tuesday, the 2017 world bobsled and skeleton championships were moved from Russia after several of the world's top sliders said they would not compete in Russia because of doping concerns.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MLB IN BRIEF

Rockies get the deal Dunn

The Colorado Rockies shored up their shaky bullpen by agreeing to a $19 million, three-year contract with reliever Mike Dunn on Thursday.

Colorado desperately needed bullpen help after blowing 28 saves last season. The 31-year-old left-hander went 6-1 with a 3.40 ERA in 51 appearances for the Miami Marlins last season. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Conigliaro award for Solarte

San Diego Padres infielder Yangervis Solarte is the winner of the 2016 Tony Conigliaro Award.

The annual honour goes to a baseball player who overcomes adversity through "spirit, determination and courage." Solarte's wife, Yuliett Pimentel Solarte, died of cancer in September at the age of 31.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Satisfying Avocado, Lettuce and Tomato sandwich

PHOTO: MAYA VISNYEI

Ceri Marsh & Laura Keogh
For Metro Canada

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Prep time: 5 minutes
Serves 2

Ingredients
4 basil leaves, torn
1/2 avocado, pitted and mashed
1 teaspoon lemon juice
1 tomato
1 teaspoon olive oil
1/2 a head of Boston bibb lettuce
4 pieces of multi grain bread, toasted
sea salt

Directions

1. Cut tomato and lay out on a plate. Coat with olive oil and sprinkle with sea salt. Let stand.

2. Meanwhile, mash avocado in a medium bowl and then add lemon juice and torn basil. Mix until smooth.

3. Toast bread and then smear about a tablespoon and a half of the avocado spread onto the bread. Finish by adding tomato slices and a few pieces of lettuce.

4. Cut in half or in quarters and serve with some cucumber slices.

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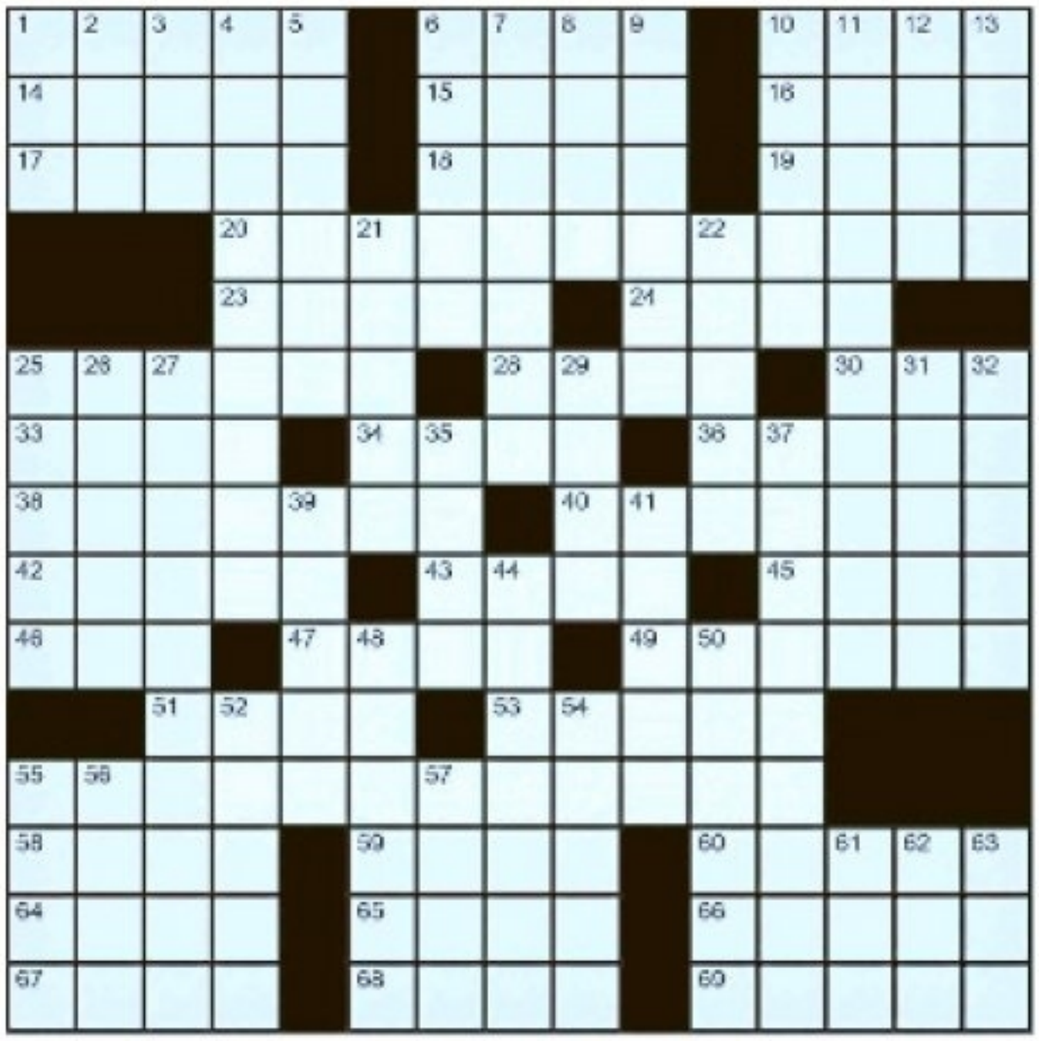
CROSSWORD Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



ACROSS
1. Australian actor Mr. Bana's
6. "Sure __ standing here..."
10. Ladies
14. "Well, obviously, Sherlock!": 2 wds.
15. Ms. Rowlands of "The Notebook" (2004)
16. Prefix to 'matic'
17. Mouthwash brand
18. Car rental company
19. River of Russia
20. Make the best of a fierce Winter day all bundled up in a toque, scarf and mittens: 3 wds.
23. "Do you have a pencil __ I can burrow?"
24. All square
25. King Arthur's nephew Knight
28. Julie Harris' role in "East of Eden" (1955)
30. Initials-sharers of Emilio Estevez's actor brother
33. Roman love god
34. "Sesame Street" character
36. Stage stuff
38. Ontario town; or, Ms. Lohan
40. Maneuvered the motor vehicle
42. "Then...?": 2 wds.
43. Wealthy
45. Canvas for a survey
46. Check/determine
47. Starring role
49. Housing market
51. Staircase support
53. __ glue
55. #27-Down's answer is a what?: 2 wds.
58. Slightly open
59. Ballerina's garb
60. Apollo, for one
64. Blight
65. Util. bill
66. Bestow with a trait
67. Comedian Mr. Caesar's
68. Office table
69. Pre-weddings parties

DOWN
1. N nn N and N and n
2. Bird of myth
3. Nuptials vow: 2 wds.
4. Dishes/glasses storage areas
5. TV personality Ms. Shepherd
6. Tequila plant source
7. Time to catch the early train during the work week, e.g.: 2 wds.
8. "Put a sock __!"
9. Utensil for preparing potatoes
10. Soya __
11. Canadian song on #27-Down: 2 wds.
12. And others, for short: 2 wds.
13. Purchased, in another word
21. Sleeping problem
22. Sidestep
25. Posh parties
26. "Oh My Darling, Clementine" part: "... excavating for __..."
27. Sarah McLachlan's new release featuring classic Christmas tunes
29. Pear variety
31. Extract metal from ore
32. Woefully
35. Vega constellation
37. Quittance
39. Strong
41. Ache a lot
44. Conceptualizes
48. Joyful
50. Projects positivity, perhaps
52. Buenos __ (Capital of Argentina)
54. __ the guitar strings
55. Montreal hockey players, to fans
56. Bionic Woman's hometown in California
57. Candy canes time
61. Mount __ (Peak of Crete)
62. __-of-war
63. Greenlight reply

IT'S ALL IN THE STARS Your daily horoscope by Francis Drake

Aries March 21 - April 20
Grab every chance to travel, because you need a change of scenery. Likewise, you will love to learn something new if you take a course or study something unusual.

Taurus April 21 - May 21
You can make headway clearing up loose details about shared property, inheritances, taxes and debt. Just roll up your sleeves and dig in. Now is the time!

Gemini May 22 - June 21
You can learn a lot about your style of relating to friends, spouses and partners at this time. Observe your style of dealing with those who are closest to you.

Cancer June 22 - July 23
You have a lot of stuff, and anything you do to help you feel better organized is a good thing. What can you do today to make your life run more smoothly?

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
You want to play and take time off from drudgery, even if it's just catching a game or going out for dinner or seeing a movie. You need some fun!

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Because you will likely earn more money soon, this is a good time to think about how you can make home repairs. You also might be focused on a parent more than usual.

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
This is a busy time for you, because short trips, reading, writing and talking to everyone will keep you on the go. Enjoy this accelerated pace.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
It's important to know what your money scene is. How much do you own? How much do you make? How much do you owe? Information is power.

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Make the most of this time with three planets are in your sign. It's easy to attract positive situations now, which means you can come out on top.

Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
You might want to hide for a few days, because you're not ready to step out into the world. When your birthday arrives, things will be different.

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Enjoy your popularity with others now. Probably more than any other sign in the zodiac, friendships mean a lot to you.

Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
Because you look so good to bosses and VIPs, use this time to go after what you want. Promote your own agenda. Speak up.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

Every row, column and box contains 1-9

					7			
		8		1			3	
	7	1	4			9		
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5	7	9	1	8	6	3	2	4
6	4	3	7	2	9	8	1	5
1	8	2	4	3	5	7	6	9
8	2	6	5	1	4	9	7	3
4	5	7	9	6	3	2	8	1
3	9	1	8	7	2	5	4	6
2	1	4	3	9	7	6	5	8
7	3	5	6	4	8	1	9	2
9	6	8	2	5	1	4	3	7

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